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LIVES

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EMINENT LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC MEN

OF FRANCE.

VOL. III.

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ANALYTICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL,

TO THE SECOND VOLUME OF

LIVES OF

EMINENT LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC MEN OF FRANCE.

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LIVES

OF

EMINENT

LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC MEN.

VOLTAIRE.

1694—1778.

It is impossible to commence the biography of this extraordinary man without feelings of apprehension as to our power of well executing the task. To write the life of Voltaire in a full and satisfactory manner, is to write not only the biography of an individual author, and the history of French literature during the course of nearly a century, but also of a revolution in the minds of men, in their opinions and rules of action, which, if not brought about entirely by him, was fostered and supported by his influence, in a manner the most singular and powerful. We are apt, as we read his letters, to laugh at the petulance which he evinced when attacked, and to reprove the vehemence with which he attacked others in return. But when we consider that an absolute monarch and a powerful hierarchy supported opinions which he and his friends struggled to subvert, we feel that it required all his dogmatic spirit, all his bitterness of sarcasm and vehemence of temper, to combat opposition, and to support both his own courage and that of his followers, in his attempt.

Voltaire has been called the Apostle of Infidelity. He denied the truths of revealed religion — he desired to subvert Christianity. He disbelieved its divine origin; he was blind to the excellence of its morality — insensible to its sublime tenets. It is easy to make his life one diatribe against the wickedness and folly of such principles and intentions — to intersperse the pages that compose his history with various epithets of condemnation of a man so lost to the knowledge of truth. But we do not intend to do this. We consider that Voltaire had many excuses, and he had also his uses. We do not mean, on the other hand, to write an elaborate defence of a system that cannot be defended; but we will mention the heads of those topics which we consider available for his justification to a certain limited extent.

In the first place, Catholicism is not Christianity. Voltaire's great war was against the church of Rome, and more particularly against the Gallican church, which was one of great persecution, bigotry, and misused power. We turn to the pages that record the history of his country, during the years that immediately preceded him, and of his own age, and we find them stained with brawls and cruelties, excited and exercised by the priesthood. The quarrels of the Molinists, the Jansenists, the Quietists, and the disgraceful exhibitions of the convulsionaries, absorbed so much of the talent, and perverted so much the uprightness and charity, of men of first-rate genius, that we turn with pity and loathing from the history of the misuse of one of the best gifts of God. Voltaire had it deeply at heart to put an end to these discussions — to prevent such men as Bossuet and Fénélon from expending their vast talents on unworthy squabbles, and to prevent such men as Pascal and Racine from sacrificing their talents at the altars of superstition. He wished to redeem such of his countrymen as were slaves to the priests, from the miseries of bigotry and ignorance; and he most ardently desired to

liberate those, whose piety was enlightened, from persecution at the hands of bigots. The cruelties exercised on the Huguenots raised a tumult of generous indignation in his benevolent heart; the insolence and barbarity with which the French priesthood endeavoured to quell all rebellion to their authority roused his anger and pointed his sarcasms. Liberty for the soul was the aim of his endeavours. It was a noble and a useful one.

He went too far. There are two classes of minds among men of education. Those who live for the affections — for the elegances of literature—for moral and intellectual purposes; who are virtuous and enlightened, but devoid of enthusiasm for truth or the dissemination of opinion. There is another class, to whom what they consider truth is the great all in all. It is vain to talk to them of a falsehood or mistake that has its good uses; they consider truth, that most glorious attribute of God, as the best of all things — the reformer of abuses — the sustainer of the unfortunate — the advancer of human excellence — the rock in which we ought to put our trust. To them, truth, or what they consider truth, is light; falsehood, darkness. Such a mind was Voltaire. He did not distinguish the truths of the Gospel from the multifarious, sometimes ridiculous, but always pernicious, impostures of papacy. He read of, and his heart revolted from, the series of intolerable evils brought upon the world by the Roman Catholic religion; he forgot the civilisation produced by the Gospel, and even the uses of the system of the church of Rome during days of feudal barbarism: he saw only the evil, and visited the whole with his reprobation, his ridicule, his unflinching and unwearied opposition. He fell into great and mischievous mistakes. As is often the case, he destroyed, but he could not construct. France owed to his mighty labours and powerful influence a great and swift advance in civilisation, and enfranchisement from political and priestly thraldom. But he went beyond the useful and right in his struggle; and, not contented with warring against superstition, made

inroads into the blessed fields of rational piety. This must be admitted and censured. Let some among us rise to drive him back and barricade him from his invasion on revealed religion; but let us do this without rancour or scurrility, feeling grateful at the same time for the good he did achieve, and acknowledging our esteem for his motives and abilities. Let us, above all, in writing his life, show ourselves just and impartial. From the limited nature of this work, we can only present the reader with a sketch of his labours and their effects; it is our earnest desire that this sketch should be one drawn from undoubted sources, and prove itself to the minds of all, a fair, exact, and impartial account of so great a man.

François-Marie Arouet was born at Chatenay, 20th of February, 1694. His enemies, in after life, displayed their spite by promulgating that his father was a peasant—an assertion without foundation. His father was a notary by profession, and filled the situation of treasurer of the chamber of accounts; a lucrative place, which he occupied with such integrity as to save but a small fortune, where others amassed great riches. His mother was named Marguerite d'Aumont, of a noble family of Poitou. The child was so feeble at the time of his birth that he was not expected to survive; he was hastily baptized in the house, nor considered sufficiently strong to be carried to church until he was nine months old, when he was baptized over again by the parish curate, from whom his age was concealed. Condorcet, in his life, remarks the singularity that two illustrious men of letters of that day, Voltaire and Fontenelle, were both born so feeble as not to be expected to survive, and yet lived to extreme age. He might have added the more curious instance of their contemporary, the marshal de Richelieu, a six months' child, fostered in cotton and reared artificially, who enjoyed strong and robust health, and lived till a still more advanced age.

The child was quick and sprightly; he had an elder

brother, who was dull and sombre. The elder, in progress of time, became a Jansenist, a convulsionary, and a bigot; the germ of his tendency to superstition existed even in childhood; and the brothers disputed, in prose and verse, to the amusement of the family. The abbé de Chateauneuf, godfather to François-Marie, took pleasure in educating him, and taught him some of La Fontaine's fables. The boy got hold also of a deistical ode, attributed to J. B. Rousseau, called the "Mosaide," a poem, which said——

> "Les hommes vains et fanatiques
> Reçoivent, sans difficulté,
> Les fables les plus chimériques;
> Un petit mot d'éternité
> Les rend bénins et pacifiques;
> Et l'on réduit ainsi le peuple hébété
> A baiser les liens dont il est garrotté."

This was a singular production to put into a child's hand: it was more singular that a child should enter into its meaning. François-Marie quoted it against his brother in argument, and his father, frightened at the premature wit and freedom of speech his son betrayed, hastened to send him to school.

He entered the college of Louis-le-Grand, of which the Jesuits were the preceptors. Here the boy learned, not to take part with the Jesuits, but to despise the Jansenists, against whom, as an author, he showed himself hostile. The talents of the child rendered him a favourite with the greater number of his masters; father Porée, professor of rhetoric, saw the germ of remarkable talents, which he took great pleasure in developing; and, in after life, Voltaire always expressed gratitude for his master's encouragement and kindness. Encouragement of a far different and of a pernicious sort he received from another professor, father le Jay, who entered into arguments with his pupil; was irritated by his wit and sophistry; and on one occasion, angrily exclaimed that he would become the "Choryphæus of Deism,"—a prophecy which this very denunciation helped probably to fulfil. On all sides, the boy found admiration for his premature genius. His godfather 1704. Ætat. 10.

introduced him to Ninon de L'Enclos, then advanced in years, but still full of that warmth of intellect and feeling that distinguished her whole career. She perceived and appreciated the child's genius, and no doubt her kindness and conversation tended to open his mind and refine his wit at a very early age. When she died, Ninon left him a legacy to buy books.

On leaving college the abbè de Chateauneuf introduced his godson into Parisian society. There had been a time when Louis XIV. assembled the most distinguished men of the kingdom at his court, and wit and refinement were almost confined to the circles of Versailles. In his old age, under the tutelage of madame de Maintenon and his confessors, Louis disregarded every merit but that of piety which bore the Molinist stamp. Catinat was disgraced, notwithstanding his virtues and military talents, because he was suspected of freethinking; the duke de Vendôme was reproached bitterly for not going daily to mass: bigotry, hypocrisy, and dulness reigned at Versailles. But the king was old, and could no longer make his will the fashion of the day. Unfortunately, bigotry and hypocrisy are apt to beget their opposites. The society of Paris, throwing off the yoke of royal intolerance, gave itself up to pleasure and licence. The young Arouet was introduced to the circles whose members enjoyed pre-eminence for birth and talent; he became a favourite; he wrote verses; he meditated a tragedy: his whole heart was devoted to becoming a poet and man of letters. When, on occasion of the dispute between Jean Baptiste Rousseau and Saurin, the former was banished, the young Arouet took the part of the victim, and exerted himself to make a subscription in his favour. He was now known and admired by all the first people of Paris, though he failed when he wished to bring out a tragedy on the stage, and to be crowned by the academy. The actors rejected his play; the academicians preferred another poet. The disappointed youth revenged himself by writing a satire against his rival.

M. Arouet was deeply pained by the course his son was taking; he considered the career of a literary man that of disgrace and ruin. He proposed to him to accept the office of counsellor to parliament; his son replied, that he would not buy, but earn, distinction. His attempt with the academy, and the literary quarrels that ensued, raised his father's inquietudes to the greatest height; he threatened his son with various marks of his severity, and the quarrel was becoming critical, when the marquis de Chateauneuf, ambassador to Holland, offered to take him with him to that country in the quality of page. His father readily consented to a plan which removed him from a scene where his literary ambition was excited by rivalship, and fostered by admiration.

It is, as it appears to us, a most interesting task to inquire into the early days of such a man as Voltaire; to find the exterior circumstances that influenced his mind, and the passions that were excited in his unformed character. The atmosphere of wit and gaiety which Voltaire carried with him wherever he went made him a favourite; and this favour again imparted zest to his desire for literary advancement. His father's opposition produced a thousand struggles in his mind, that tended, in the end, to give force to his inclinations: he became eager to exonerate himself, and to elevate the profession which he wished to adopt; and this gave dignity to his endeavours. Now, torn from his partial friends, and thrown on a new scene, his mind was yet further excited to gain strength. His curiosity, as to the manners and peculiarities of a strange country, was insatiable: he carried everywhere his keen observing spirit; and his early travels out of France tended to enlarge his understanding, and shake his prejudices. 1714. Ætat. 20.

Youthful passion intruded to disturb his residence in Holland. Madame du Noyer was born a Protestant; she abjured her religion when she married; and then, desirous of separating from her husband, she made religion the pretext, and fled to Holland with her two

daughters. She resided at the Hague, where she subsisted on a sort of traffic of libels. Fear of the Bastille, and the laws against the freedom of the press, restrained the busy Parisians from publishing the vast quantity of libels, epigrams, and satires, which were continually being manufactured in that metropolis: these made their way to Holland; and the collecting of such, and publishing them, became a sort of trade,—infamous indeed, but lucrative. Madame du Noyer was at once notorious and enriched, by being pre-eminent in the traffic. One of her daughters was married; with the other—a gentle, amiable girl—Voltaire fell in love. He wished to save her out of the hands of such a mother. Madame du Noyer discovered the intercourse, and complained to the ambassador, who put his page under arrest, and sent an account of his son's attachment to the father. Young Arouet meanwhile carried on his intercourse with the young lady by stealth, and was again denounced to the marquis by madame du Noyer; he, seeing himself in danger of being compromised by the malice of a woman whose great desire was to create scandal, and by the perseverance of his page, sent him back to Paris. His father, knowing the vehement and resolute disposition of his son, was prepared to prevent the continuance of his love affair by the severest measures: he obtained an order that permitted him either to imprison or to transport him to the isles. The poor lawyer, whose career had been one of routine and respectability, was rendered equally miserable by both his sons; the elder having immersed himself in the Jansenist quarrels: and the old man declared that he had two fools for children, one in prose, and the other in verse.

On his return to Paris the young Arouet had two objects chiefly at his heart;—to take his mistress out of the hands of her infamous mother, and to reconcile himself to his father. For the sake of the first, he did not scruple to apply to the Jesuits, and to employ religion as the pretext. He applied also to M. du Noyer:

he interested the court in the conversion. It was agreed that mademoiselle du Noyer should be carried off, and brought to the convent of New Converts in Paris; but the marquis de Chateauneuf opposed himself to so violent a proceeding, and the plan fell to the ground. In the sequel, the young lady married the baron de Winterfeld, and always preserved a great esteem and friendship for her early friend.

The young man was not less earnest to be reconciled to his father. He was carried away by innate genius to cultivate literature; but his heart was good, and he revolted from the idea of living at variance with his parent. He wrote a pathetic letter to him, declaring that he was ready to emigrate to America, and to live on bread and water, if only, before he went, he were forgiven. M. Arouet was touched by this mark of submission; and, on receiving the further one of his son's consent to attend the office of a procureur, or attorney, he was reconciled to him.

The young poet became the pupil of M. Alain, an attorney, residing in a dark, obscure quarter of Paris. Disagreeable as this change was, it had its advantages; it strengthened his habits of industry, and it taught him a knowledge of business. Voltaire became in after life a rich man, through his excellent management of his affairs: a legal education was the foundation of his prosperity. He lightened his labours, also, by forming a friendship with another pupil. Thiriot had not his friend's talents, but he shared in his youth his enthusiasm for literature: an intimacy was formed which lasted Thiriot's life. In spite of various acts of faithlessness on the part of the latter, Voltaire remained, to the end, constant to his early friend. However, the business of procureur became intolerable. He still frequented the society of Paris. He had become deeply in love with madame de Villars: he afterwards averred that this was the only passion he had ever felt that was stronger than his love of study, and caused him to lose time. Its ill success made him conquer it; but the society into

which he was drawn rendered him still more averse to his legal studies. He implored his father to permit him to quit them; the old man asked him what other profession he would adopt: to this the son could not reply.

He had a friend, M. de Caumartin, who was also acquainted with the father, and asked permission that François-Marie should visit him at his chateau of St. Ange, where he could deliberate at leisure on his future course, and where he would be separated from the connections deemed so dangerous. At St. Ange the young poet found a library; and, plunging into study, became more than ever eager for the acquisition of knowledge. The father of his host was a man of great age; he had been familiar with the nobles of the days of Henri IV., and with the friends of Sully: his enthusiasm for those times and men was warm and eloquent. Voltaire listened to his anecdotes and eulogies with deep interest; and began, without yet forming a plan, to write verses in their honour.

The last years of the reign of Louis XIV. had been disastrous, through unfortunate wars and pernicious policy. Adversity in various forms visited the old age of that illustrious monarch. The generation immediately succeeding to him, brought up in his days of glory and power, died off; of the young race that remained, its hope and flower, the duke of Burgundy, died; he lost another of his grandsons also by death, and the third was removed to the throne of Spain. The successor to his crown was an infant only five years of age; the successor to his power was a prince whose dissolute character inspired the devout with hatred, and the thoughtful with sorrow and distrust. It was a moment
1715. full of eager interest, when Louis died; the cord that
Ætat. held the faggot snapped; and it became doubtful by
21. whom, and in what way, it would again be gathered together. The pupil of Dubois became regent; the kingdom rang with his intrigues, his debaucheries, and the misconduct of his children. But the duke of Orleans, perverted as he was as a moral character, was a

man of talent, and an enlightened ruler. He maintained peace: and though the kingdom was convulsed during his regency by the system of Law, yet its general prosperity was increased; showing, however speculative and wild a people may be in their financial schemes, yet, as long as they are preserved from war, no event can materially injure their prosperity. The regent was, to a certain degree, king Log, with this exception,—that his libertinism offered a pernicious example, which plunged Parisian society in immorality, while his toleration gave encouragement to those men of talent whose aim was to disseminate knowledge and liberal opinions.

On the death of Louis XIV., young Arouet left St. Ange, and came up to Paris to witness the effects of the change. He found the people in a delirium of joy; they celebrated the death of their sovereign by getting drunk with delight, and by manifesting their detestation of the Jesuits, who had so long tyrannised over them. Paris became inundated with satires and epigrams: the French, as in the days of the Fronde, were apt to signalise their aversions in witty and libellous verses. Voltaire was accused of writing a piece of this kind; it was entitled "Les J'ai vu," in which the author enumerates all the abuses and evils he had witnessed, and concludes by saying,—

J'ai vu ces maux, et je n'ai pas vingt ans.

Voltaire was two and twenty, but the difference was slight, and the verses were clever; he was accused of being their author, and thrown into the Bastille. The solicitations of his powerful friends were of no avail to liberate him. His father saw with grief the melancholy accomplishment of all his prognostics, and failed in his efforts to obtain his release. It was not till the true author of the verses, touched by remorse, confessed to having written them, that Voltaire was set free. 1716. Ætat. 22.

He passed a whole year in his prison without society or books, or ink and paper. We find no mention in his

works or letters of the extreme sufferings which solitary and unemployed confinement must have inflicted on a man as vivacious, sensitive, and restless — delicate in health, and vehement in temper — as Voltaire, except in the deep terror with which he regarded the possibility of a second imprisonment. Thrown back on the stores of his own mind, his latest impressions were those of the conversations at St. Ange with the elder Caumartin, and the enthusiasm excited for Henri IV. and his contemporaries. The idea of an epic on this subject suggested itself. It flattered his honest pride to raise a monument of glory to the French nation in the form of a national poem, while he was the victim of the government; his literary vanity was enticed by the idea of sending his name down to posterity as the author of a French epic, a work hitherto unattempted in verse. He composed the first two cantos in his dungeon, in his mind, committing them memory; and it was his boast that, in all his subsequent improvements, he never changed a word in the second canto. He was prouder, in after life, of being the author of the "Henriade" than of any other production. His contemporaries regarded it with admiration; even our own countryman, lord Chesterfield, declares it the best epic in any language, simply because, according to the reasons he gives, it is the most devoid of imagination.

Epic poetry, in its essence, is the greatest achievement of the human intellect. It takes a subject of universal interest; it exalts it by solemn and sacred sentiments, and adorns it with sublime and beautiful imagery, thus lifting it above humanity into something divine. While the mind of man enjoys the attribute of being able to tincture its earthly ideas with the glory of something greater than itself in its every day guise, which it can only seize by snatches, and embody through the exertion of a power granted only to the favoured few, whom we name great poets, — and while it can exercise this power in giving grandeur to a narration of lofty and sublime incidents, — while this can be done by

some, and appreciated by many, an epic must continue to rank as the crowning glory of literature. We find nothing of all this in the "Henriade." The very elevation of the sentiments is rendered commonplace by Voltaire's inability to mould language to his thoughts. During the whole poem he suffered language to be the shaper of his ideas—not the material which he forced to take a shape. In his letters, he quotes Fénélon's just opinion, that the French language might be adapted to lyrical poetry, but not to epic. He fancies that he disproves this assertion in the "Henriade;" while, in fact, he gives it entire support.* The second canto is the favourite of many French critics. They consider the account Henri IV. gives queen Elizabeth of the civil struggles of France a masterpiece. It consists of a rapid and forcible view of that disastrous period. But it contains no poetry. Voltaire's imagination was fertile, versatile, and gay; in some of his tragedies, he even rose to the passionate and energetic; but it wanted elevation—it wanted the fairy hue—the sublime transfusion of the material into the immaterial. It wanted, above all, a knowledge and love of nature. There is not a word in the "Henriade" descriptive of scenery, or storm, or calm, or night, or day, that is not commonplace, imitative, and without real imagery. Of imagery, indeed, he has no notion. Besides this, he always acted by his own verses as by those of others, and corrected them into tameness. In a word, the "Henriade" has no pretensions to success as an epic poem, and is, in whatever view we take of it, dull and tiresome. Even in his days it had not enjoyed the reputation it reached but for his admirable powers of reciting, by which he fascinated the circles of Paris, and the peculiar circumstances that rendered every other opinion in France an echo of those

* His own high opinion of the "Henriade" is manifested in certain verses he wrote on the subject, which may be mentioned as proof, at once, of his vanity and his entire inability to understand and appreciate poetry. These verses, indeed, only embody, in a few lines, his "Essay on Epic Poetry," in which he proves that absence of imagination is the chief merit of a poet.

circles.* There is an amusing anecdote told, which shows, however, that the charm of his reading did not always suffice to gain unqualified approbation. One day so many petty criticisms were flung at him, that, irritated to the utmost, he exclaimed, "Then it is only fit to be burnt!" and threw the poem into the fire. The president Hainaut sprang forward, and saved it, saying, as he gave it back to the author, "You must not think that your poem is better than its hero. Yet, notwithstanding his faults, he was a great king, and the best of men." "Remember," the president afterwards wrote, "that it cost me a pair of lace ruffles to save it from the fire."

The chief interest of the poem lies in the era of its conception, and in the fact that its composition alleviated the horrors of his dungeon. At last he was set free. The duke of Orleans being informed of his innocence, he was liberated. The regent compensated for the mistake by a present of money. Voltaire, on thanking the regent, said, "I thank your royal highness for continuing to support me, but I entreat you not to burden yourself again with finding me a lodging." The genius

* That we may be impartial, we quote the opinion expressed of this poem by a modern French critic. Barante, in his "Essay on French Literature of the Eighteenth Century," remarks, "Voltaire has most fallen in his reputation as an epic poet. He flattered himself in vain that he had bestowed an epic on France. Such a work could not he produced in the times in which he lived, nor with a character like his. For epic poetry we need the lively and free imagination of the first ages: knowledge must not have weakened faith, enthusiasm of feeling, nor the variety and vigour of character. . . . . By a serious and melancholy character, and pure and true feelings, and the memory of adversity brooded over in solitude, an epic might be rendered as touching as it has been rendered sublime, and interest might stand in place of imagination. But if Virgil secluded himself from the influence of the court of Augustus, Voltaire was far from avoiding that of the court of the regent. He composed an epic poem with the same degree of interest as would have sufficed to enable him to write an epistle in verse. He fancied that an epic consisted in certain forms agreed upon, in prescribed supernatural agency. He fulfilled these rules, and believed that he had achieved a great work. He was not aware that it is not a dream, a recital, and the introduction of divinities, that constitutes an epic poem; but an elevated and solemn imagination; and, above all, simplicity and truth, under whatever form. The Iliad does not resemble the Odyssey in the arrangement of its parts: these poems have nothing in common, except the epic spirit." So far the enlightened critic speaks. Then, to soothe ruffled French vanity, he adds, "Nevertheless, it cannot by denied that the 'Henriade' contains great beauties; the poetry is not epic, but is sometimes elevated and pathetic."

and wit, however, of Voltaire, continued to expose him to calumny and danger. He was suspected of having written the "Philippiques," a clever, but most atrocious libel against the regent and his family. His frequent visits at Sceaux, the palace of the duchess de Maine, and his intimacy with Goerts, caused his name to be mingled in the intrigues which cardinal Alberoni excited in France. The regent, however, refused to credit his enemies, and limited his displeasure to an intimation that he had better absent himself from Paris for a time. Voltaire spent several months in going from one friend's chateau to another, being sedulously occupied, meanwhile, by the "Henriade" and other literary projects. The most important in his eyes was his tragedy of "Œdipus." This piece, commenced at eighteen, altered and altered again, was at last brought out, and had the greatest success. This was not solely caused by its intrinsic merit. The reputation of the author, its being his first tragedy, and the discussions to which it gave rise with regard to the ancient and modern theatre, imparted a factitious interest; it was attacked and defended on all sides, and pamphlets were daily published and hawked about on the subject. To these legitimate sources of interest were added the unworthy one of the calumnies in vogue against the duke of Orleans, which made the odious subject of the tragedy peculiarly piquante.* 1718. Ætat. 24.

Voltaire wrote several letters on the treatment of his subject. His critique on the tragedies of Sophocles gives us, at once, the measure of his taste and learning: nothing can be more contemptible than either. The French *soi-disant* poet was utterly incapable of entering into the solemn spirit of the Athenian tragedian, and still less could he comprehend his sublime poetry, being even ignorant of the language in which it was written.

* The love of scandal, which belongs to humanity, always busies itself in exaggerations. In a virtuous and primitive state of society, slight peccadilloes serve the turn of the backbiter; the inventions grow with the necessity of surpassing the fact. If the regent had been a Quaker, he would have been accused of kissing any favoured lady by stealth: being unfortunately a profligate, he was accused of incest; the next step beyond the fact which it was necessary for slander to make.

The "Œdipus Tyrannus" of Sophocles is admirable as a work of art, and more admirable from a certain majesty that sustains the subject and characters to the end, and from the solemn, magnificent beauty of the choruses. All this was a dead letter to the sprightly Parisian, who admits that had Sophocles lived in his days, he had written better, but had never approached the greatness of Racine.

The life of Voltaire was an alternation of pleasure and literary labour, which would have been infinitely delightful but for that system of caballing which existed in French society, more especially among authors. Voltaire had to struggle with the envious and the presumptuous. His method of warfare was bold; it was that of attack rather than of defence. He was unsparing towards his enemies, and this perpetuated hostilities that robbed him of peace and leisure. Add to this, his labours were often interrupted by bodily suffering; for, though his constitution was strong, he was afflicted by a painful disease. Still pleasure waited on his moments of ease and leisure. Sometimes he resided in Paris, but much of his time was spent in visiting, by turns, the chateaus of the chief nobility; private theatricals, in which his own plays were got up with care and splendour, were principal amusements at these country residences. While at Maisons, a chateau belonging to the president des Maisons, he was seized with the small-pox, on the very eve of a festival, during which a comedy was to be acted, and he, himself, was to read his tragedy of "Mariamne;" he was attended by Gervasi, who treated him in the, then, novel manner, of letting blood and lowering remedies, by means of which he recovered. His friend Thiriot came up from Normandy, and waited on him with anxious solicitude. When he recovered, "Mariamne" was brought out; it went through forty representations, though it nearly fell on the first, through the levity of a Parisian audience. When, in the fifth act, Mariamne put the cup of poison to her lips, a man in the pit called out, "La

Reine boit!" On the succeeding night the mode of her death was changed. Restless, and on the alert for the ridiculous, the danger of saying anything that suggested a ludicrous or familiar idea continually hampered a French tragedian; yet, with all his vanity and eagerness for success, Voltaire's lively spirits made him sometimes jest with peril. When "Œdipus" was acted, he went on the stage himself, holding up the train of the high priest, and played such antics that the mareschale de Villars asked who the young man was who was desirous of getting the piece condemned. This very liveliness was, however, a great cause of his universal success. The Parisians, and especially the nobility, desired to be amused, and no man was ever born so fitted to afford excitement to the circles of the rich and gay, as the vain, witty, restless, eager poet, who made a jest of everything, yet rendered all instinct with the interest imparted by his good heart and versatile talents.

His quarrel with Jean Baptiste Rousseau is characteristic. He visited Holland in 1722 with madame Rupelmonde. When passing through Brussels, he sought out the poet whom he had befriended in his need, and whose talents he admired. They met with delight. Voltaire called him his master and judge; he placed his "Henriade" in his hand, and read him various of his epistles. All went smilingly for a short time. Rousseau read some of his poetry in return. Voltaire did not approve. Rousseau was piqued. Various sarcasms were interchanged. Rousseau had composed an "Ode to Posterity." Voltaire told him that it would never reach its address. A violent quarrel ensued, and Rousseau became his bitter enemy.

A more serious dissension interrupted the routine of his life. One day, dining at the table of the duke de Sully, one of his warmest friends, he was treated impertinently by the chevalier de Rohan, a man of high birth, but disreputable character. The chevalier asked, Who he was? Voltaire replied that he did not

inherit a great name, but would never dishonour that which he bore. The chevalier angrily left the room, and took his revenge by causing him to be seized and struck with a cane by his servants. Such were the prejudices then existent in the minds of the French noblesse, that though the duke de Sully esteemed and even loved Voltaire, and held the chevalier de Rohan in contempt, yet the bourgeois birth of the former, and noble blood of the latter, caused him to show himself perfectly indifferent to the insult. Voltaire resolved to avenge himself. He secluded himself from all society, and practised fencing carefully. As soon as he considered himself a match for his enemy, he sought him out at the opera, and demanded satisfaction. The chevalier appointed time and place for a duel, and then acquainted his family. The consequence was, the instant arrest of his antagonist, and his imprisonment for six months in the Bastille; to which was added the further injustice of an order of exile after his liberation from prison.

1728. Ætat. 34. Voltaire took this opportunity to visit England. He had been acquainted with lord and lady Bolingbroke in France. He appreciated the talents of the illustrious Englishman, admired his various knowledge, and was fascinated by the charms of his conversation. Although he never appears to have at all understood the real foundations of English liberty, yet he appreciated its effects, especially at a moment when he was suffering so grievously from an act of despotism. Liberty of thought was in his eyes a blessing superior to every other. He read the works of Locke with enthusiasm; and while he lamented that such disquisitions were not tolerated in France, he became eager to impart to his countrymen the new range of ideas he acquired from the perusal. The discoveries of Newton also attracted his attention. He exchanged the frivolities of Paris for serious philosophy. He became aware that freedom from prejudice and the acquirement of knowledge were not mere luxuries intended for the few, but

a blessing for the many; to confer and extend which was the duty of the enlightened. From that moment he resolved to turn his chief endeavours to liberate his country from priestly thraldom and antique prejudices. He felt his powers; his industry was equal to his wit, and enabled him to use a vast variety of literary weapons. What his countrymen deemed poetry, the drama, history, philosophy, and all slighter compositions, animated by wit and fancy, were to be put in use by turns for this great end. He published his "Henriade" while in England. It was better received than it deserved; and the profits he gained were the foundation of his future opulence. He wrote the tragedy of "Brutus," in which he imagined that he developed a truly republican spirit, and a love of liberty worthy of the Romans.

He spent three years in exile. He became eager to return to his country, to his friends, and to a public which naturally understood him better, and could sympathise more truly with him than the English. He ventured over to Paris. For a time his return was known only to a few friends, and he resided in an obscure quarter of the capital. By degrees he took courage; and the success of various tragedies which he brought out raised him high in public favour, and promised greater security for the future. He was regarded as the pride of France by the majority of his countrymen. The priesthood—accustomed to persecute on the most frivolous pretexts of difference of opinion — who had excited Louis XIV. to banish the Jansenists and suppress their convents — to exile the virtuous Fénélon — to massacre the Huguenots, who had long wielded religion as a weapon of offence and destruction, and had risen to a bad height of power by its misuse—held him in the sincerest hatred; while his attacks, excited by, and founded on, their crimes, unveiled to the world a scene which, had it not been rife with human suffering, had been worthy only of ridicule. A couplet in "Œdipus" first awakened their suspicion and hatred:—

"Nos prêtres ne sont point ce qu'un vain peuple pense,
Notre credulité fait tout leur science."

From that moment they lay in wait to crush him. It needed all his prudence to evade the effects of their enmity. There was a party in Paris, indeed, who went to the opposite extreme, by which he was idolised — a party which saw no medium between the superstition upheld by the clergy and direct disbelief, which it termed philosophy. This, indeed, is one of the chief mischiefs of Catholicism — by demanding too much of faith, it engenders entire infidelity; and by making men, sinful as ourselves, the directors of the conduct and thoughts, it injures the moral sense and deadens the conscience. The party in opposition had not yet risen to the height of talent it afterwards displayed; but it sufficed, through the rank, abilities, and number of the persons of whom it was composed, to encourage Voltaire in his career. Another chief support was derived from the liberal independence of means which he had attained. He inherited a competent fortune from his father and brother; the profits of "Œdipus" added to it; the duke of Orleans had made him presents; the queen of Louis XV. bestowed a pension on him; the edition of the "Henriade," brought out in London, augmented his means considerably: he was economical and careful. A fortunate speculation in a lottery instituted to pay the debts of the city of Paris, in which, from certain happy calculations, he was the chief winner, raised him to opulence. He was charitable and benevolent; and though, in his letters, we find allusions to his donations, this is never done ostentatiously, but with the plain speech of a man who, having fabricated his own fortune, knows the value of money, and keeps strict account of his expenditure. At this juncture we may also speak of his change of name. It was the custom, as is well known, for the younger branches of noble families in France to assume the name of some estate, so to distinguish themselves from their relations. In the middling ranks the same

custom was in a manner followed. Boileau took the name of Despréaux, and his younger brother that of Puy Morin, to distinguish themselves from the elder. People in this rank did not assume the *de* — distinctive of territorial possession. François-Marie Arouet thought it worth while, however, to purchase the estate of Voltaire (as Madame Searron, at Louis XIV.'s instigation, had that of Maintenon), as a means of elevating himself to a more respectable position in the eyes of his contemporaries. He succeeded; and though, to our ears, Arouet had sounded as well as Voltaire, did it stand in the title-page of his works; in his own day, in spite of various petty attacks from his enemies, the one he assumed was regarded by his countrymen with greater complacency.

The heyday of youth was passing away with Voltaire; his vivacity was still the same: but, from the period of his return from his exile in England, he began to look differently on life; and while he still regarded literary labour as his vocation, literary glory as the aim of his existence, he grew indifferent to the pleasures of society. At one time he meditated expatriating himself; thus to acquire liberty of writing and publishing without fear of the Bastille. His attachment for madame du Chatelet caused him to alter this plan. This lady was distinguished for her learning, her love of philosophy, and talent for the abstruse sciences. She was witty, and endowed with qualities attractive in society; but she preferred study, and the acquisition of literary renown, in seclusion. This friend induced Voltaire to remain in France, but strengthened his purpose of retiring from Paris. Various persecutions were, however, in wait for him before he gained a tranquil retreat.

Voltaire wrote his tragedies as a means of gaining public favour. He knew his countrymen. As a sovereign of the French must gather popularity by leading them to victory and military glory, so must an author, who would acquire their favour, achieve eminent success, at once to raise their enthusiasm, and to gratify their vanity,

by making them participate in the greatness of his name. On his return from England, Voltaire determined to acquire the popular favour, by his triumphs in the drama. At first he was not as successful as he wished: his "Brutus" fell coldly on the gay, excitement-hunting Parisians; "Eryphile," on which he spent excessive pains,—remodelling and re-writing different portions again and again, — had faults that the author's quick eye discerned at once to be incurable, and he withdrew it after the first representation. "Zaire" repaid him for these disappointments; — "Zaire," which, whatever its faults may be, is so fresh, so eloquent, so deeply and naturally pathetic. This play was written in twenty-two days. It was a happy thought.

1732. Ætat. 38. Voltaire writes concerning it: "I never worked so fast; the subject carried me on, and the piece wrote itself. I have tried to depict what has been long in my head, — Turkish manners contrasted with Christian manners; and to unite, in the same picture, all that our religion has of dignified, and even tender, with an affecting and passionate love." Two months afterwards, he writes: "I wish you had witnessed the success of 'Zaire;' allow me to enjoy freely, with you, the pleasure of succeeding. Never was piece played so well as 'Zaire' at the fourth representation. I wish you had been there; you would have seen that the public does not hate your friend. I appeared in a box, and the whole pit clapped. I blushed, and hid myself; but I should be deceitful did I not confess that I was deeply moved; — it is delightful not to be put to shame in one's own country." But, after this triumph, he laboured to correct his piece. He feared, he said, to have owed too much to the large dark eyes of mademoiselle Gaussin, and to the picturesque effect produced by the mingling of plumes and turbans on the stage. He felt, for the moment, that he had arrived at the height of literary renown, and that his task was nearly fulfilled. "What labour and pains I go through," he writes, "for this smoke of vain glory! Yet what should we do without the chimæra?

it is as necessary to the soul as food to the body. I shall re-write 'Eryphile,' and the 'Death of Cæsar,'— all for this smoke. Meanwhile I am correcting the 'History of Charles XII.' for an edition in Holland; and when this is done, I shall finish the 'Letters on England,' which you know of,— that will be a month's work; after which I must return to my dramas, and finish, at last, by the 'History of the Age of Louis XIV.' This, dear friend, is the plan of my life."

New persecutions were in store for him, to disturb his schemes. Mademoiselle de Couvreur was the most eminent actress of the time; she was his friend, and had shown her generosity by attending on him at the dangerous moment of his attack of small pox. She was worthy of his good opinion; there was a dignity in her character which imparted the chief charm to her acting, and rendered her estimable in private life. When she died, according to the insulting practice of the French clergy, burial rites and holy ground were denied the corpse, and she was interred on the banks of the Seine. Voltaire could not restrain his indignation. Warmed by esteem for his friend, and contempt for the priesthood, he wrote her apotheosis, which drew on him the outcry of impiety, and forced him to conceal himself for some months in a village of Normandy.

Scarcely had this storm passed off, than another broke over him. His exile in England occurred during the reign of George II., at a time when literature boasted of great and glorious names; and if the principles of political liberty were less well understood than now, they appeared in a highly flourishing condition to the Frenchman. He regarded with admiration the blessings derived from toleration in religion, a comparatively free government, a press unfettered by a censorship, and the general diffusion of knowledge. He wished to describe these things and their effects to his countrymen, and he wrote his "Lettres sur les Anglais." There is nothing —save a passing Voltairian sarcasm here and there —to shock our notions in this work. It begins with an ac-

count of the Quakers, — to demonstrate that dissent in religion, joined to independence of thought and action, could accord with a peaceable fulfilment of the duties of a subject. He commences with a humorous description of a Quaker, to whom he was introduced, who receives him with his hat on, and without making a bow; speaks to him with the thee and thou, and defends the peculiar tenets of his sect. He goes on to give the history of Fox and Penn. Other letters concern the parliament, the government, the encouragement given to literary men, and literature itself, of the introduction of inoculation; and then comes his main topic, — the discoveries of Newton, and the philosophy of Locke. It is a work that would have excited no censure in England; but he was well aware that both it and its author would be denounced in France. When he thought of publishing it, he at the same time entertained the plan of expatriation; when he relinquished this, he meant to suppress his book; but it was published through the treachery of a bookseller. A *lettre de cachet* was granted against him, of which he received timely notice, and left Paris to conceal himself at Cirey, while he gave out that he was in England. The volume itself was publicly burnt. He obtained a cessation of the persecution by causing the edition to be given up; but he did not return to Paris, and continued to inhabit the chateau of Cirey, in Champagne, a property of the marquis du Chatelet, where he and his wife, and their illustrious friend, lived for the space of six years in seclusion and laborious study.

We have, from various sources, descriptions of the life he led at Cirey; not a little instructive from the light they throw on human nature, and on Voltaire's own character. Voltaire tells us, himself, in his "Fragment of Memoirs," that, weary of the idle, turbulent life led at Paris, of the pretensions of the silly, the cabals of the wicked, and persecutions of bigots, he resolved to pass some years in the country at the chateau of madame du Chatelet. This lady had received a careful education, was perfectly mistress of the Latin

language, but her inclination led her to prefer the study of metaphysics and mathematics. Her ardour for the acquisition of knowledge was unspeakably great, and she longed for retirement, where she might dedicate her whole time to study. Voltaire taught her English: she read Leibnitz and Newton. Both she and her friend aspired to the prize given by the Academy of Science, for a treatise on fire; and their essays were mentioned with praise, though the prize was gained by the celebrated Euler. Voltaire was told, however, by an enlightened friend, that he would never be great in science. He was glad of this. The arguments and taste of madame du Chatelet, and his own love of all that was absolutely and demonstrably true, led him to cultivate abstruse science; but the bent of his genius and imagination, fertile of plot, situation, and development of passion, made him turn with delight to the composition of tragedies, the investigation of the philosophy of history, and the writing lighter productions, in which he gave full scope to his sarcastic spirit, his wit, and, we grieve to add, the impurity of his imagination: for this was the great defect of Voltaire, arising from his inability to appreciate the sublime, and his contempt of what he considered monkish virtues, that he loved to indulge in jests, the point of which lay in the grossest indecency. Having broken loose from the fetters of mathematics, he wrote "Alzire," "Merope," "The Prodigal Child," and "Mahomet." He laboured at his "Essay on the Manners and Spirit of Nations;" he collected materials for the "History of the Age of Louis XIV.;" and he relaxed from these labours by writing the "Pucelle d'Orleans." One of his chief amusements, also, was bringing out his tragedies at his private theatre. He was a good actor, and an admirable teacher of the art.

Somewhat in contrast to the sort of fairy splendour and paradisaical happiness which, from his memoirs and letters, we might judge to have been the portion of the inhabitants of Cirey, we have another account, which does not indeed derogate from the character of Voltaire

himself, but which casts gloomy and tempestuous shadows over the picture of his retirement. This account is worth quoting; though, as we shall afterwards mention, the fair writer, from private reasons, represented madame du Chatelet in darker colours than she merited.

When the marquis and marchioness du Chalelet resolved on inhabiting Cirey, the chateau was in a state of dilapidation. A portion of it was repaired, and funished with princely magnificence; partly at the expense of the owners, chiefly, it would seem, at Voltaire's, who built a gallery and bath rooms, decorated his apartments with inlaid works of marble, and adorned them with a variety of precious works of art.

Usually the family party was nearly uninterrupted. Madame du Chatelet disliked receiving visitors who should intrude on her hours of study. How the marquis regarded the severe labours of his wife, and the permanent residence of his guest, we are not told; but he seems to have been easy and complaisant. When visitors arrived, Voltaire exerted himself to entertain them by acting plays, and by calling into requisition the stores of his own mind, which, various and prolific, never failed to enchant. There was a lady, madame de Graffigny, who had been very unfortunate through the ill conduct of her husband. She at last obtained a
1738. divorce; but she was poor, and nearly friendless. She
Ætat. was asked to spend a few weeks at Cirey, and joyfully
44. accepted the flattering invitation. She had been residing at Lunéville, at the court of the ex-king of Poland: she left there a friend, who had been brought up with her as a brother; and to him she poured out, in her letters, her enthusiasm, her joy, and her subsequent disappointment and misery.

From the beginning, Voltaire acquired all her kindness by the cordiality and friendliness of his reception, and the great and delicate attention he paid to her comfort; while madame du Chatelet lost it by her coldness and selfishness. Still the wit and talent of both made it at first enchanted ground. "Supper was

announced to me," she writes, "and I was shown to an apartment which I recognised as Voltaire's. He came forward to receive me; we placed ourselves at table — I was indeed happy. We conversed on all subjects; poetry, the arts and sciences; and all in a light and witty tone. I wish I could give you an account of his charming, his enchanting conversation; but I cannot. The supper was not abundant, but it was recherché, delicate, and good, and served on a good deal of plate. Voltaire, placed next me, was as polite and attentive as he is amusing and learned. The marquis was on my other side — this is my place every evening; and thus my left ear is softly charmed, while the right is but very slightly ennuied, for the marquis speaks little, and retires as soon as we rise from table."

She describes the apartments of madame du Chatelet and Voltaire as magnificent. His was hung with crimson velvet and gold fringe, the walls were covered with pictures and looking-glasses, and the room crowded with articles of luxury in worked silver. It opened into a small gallery wainscotted with yellow wood, adorned by statues, furnished with books, and filled with tables covered with curiosities and porcelain; opening on a grotto that led to the garden. The rooms of madame du Chatelet were far more elegant and rich; splendid with mirrors in silver frames, and adorned with pictures of the first French artists. Her boudoir, of which, in her vivacious style, the guest said, "you were ready to kneel and worship for its elegant magnificence," opened on a terrace commanding a beautiful prospect: the whole was a model of luxury, taste, and elegance. Unfortunately, however, in repairing and furnishing, no attention had been paid to any apartments but those occupied by madame du Chatelet and Voltaire. Discomfort reigned everywhere else. Poor madame de Graffigny was placed in an immense chamber, ill furnished — the wind entering at a thousand crevices — which it was impossible to warm, in spite of all the wood that was burnt. "In short,"

she says, "all that does not belong to the lady or Voltaire is in a most disgusting state of discomfort."

However, talent spread its charm over the place, although madame du Chatelet, from the first, was no favourite with her guest, yet she allows that she talked well, sang divinely; was witty, eloquent, and, when she chose, pleasing; but, devoted to the study of abstruse mathematics, she gave up nearly her whole time, night and day, to these labours. Their way of life was regulated by their excessive industry. No one appeared till twelve o'clock, when coffee was announced in Voltaire's gallery for the chosen guests, while the marquis and others dined. At the end of half an hour Voltaire bowed his friends out; each retired to their room, and did not assemble again till nine for supper. This was the chosen season for conversation and enjoyment. He read to them passages from his works, he showed a magic lantern, and exerted all his wit, his buffoonery, and knowledge in the explanations. Froward as a child, amiable as a woman, always full of vivacity, his conversation was an exhaustless source of laughter and delight. When any guests were there whom they were peculiarly desirous of pleasing, everything was done for their amusement: plays were acted — no moment of repose allowed — all was gaiety and pleasure. "Voltaire," she writes, "is always charming, always occupied with amusing me; he is never weary of paying attention; he is uneasy if I seem the least ennuied. In short, I find, from experience, that agreeable occupation is the charm of life. The lady, at first a little cold, grows kinder, and we are become familiar."—"Voltaire read us two cantos of his Joan, and we had a delightful supper. Madame du Chatelet sang with her divine voice; we laughed, we knew not why — we sang canons — it was a supper during which gaiety made us say and do we knew not what; and we laughed at nothing."—"The Marionettes have greatly diverted me; they are delightful: the piece was played in which Punch's wife hopes to kill her

husband by singing *fagnana fagnana*. It was delicious to hear Voltaire say, seriously, that the piece was excellent. It is silly, is it not, to laugh at such follies? Yet I laughed. Voltaire is as delightful a child as he is a wise philosopher." — "This morning we were to hear an epistle read; but the fair lady was still in the same merry humour of yesterday; and she began to joke Voltaire, who, holding his epistle in his hand, parodied it against her in the most delightful manner: in short, there was no reading. He laughed at first, but was a little annoyed at last. For myself, I was ashamed to laugh so much; but there was so much wit; each word came and shone like lightning, and all accompanied by such vivacity and pleasantry that Heraclitus himself must have laughed." — "We had the Marionettes again. Voltaire declared that he was jealous. Do you know that I think that Voltaire shows genius in laughing at these follies. I sat next him to-day; it was a delightful seat. Yesterday evening he read an epistle which the fair lady criticised most wittily."

At other times, every hour was given to labour. Voltaire spent the entire day writing: "Does he leave his work for a quarter of an hour during the day," writes his guest, "to pay me a visit, he does not sit down, saying that the time lost in talking is frightful — that no moment ought to be wasted, and loss of time is the greatest expense of all. This has gone on for a month. When we come in to sup he is at his desk; we have half done before he joins us, and he is with difficulty prevented from returning immediately after. He exerts himself to amuse us during the meal; but evidently from sheer politeness: his thoughts are far away." Madame du Chatelet was even more industrious. "She spends her whole nights till five or six in the morning, writing; when she finds herself overcome by sleep, she puts her hands in iced water, and walks about the room to rouse herself. After this, instead of sleeping till the middle of the day, she rises at nine or ten. In short, she only gives two hours to

sleep, and never leaves her desk except for coffee and supper." This hard labour was productive of great ennui to their guests, and considerable ill health to themselves; especially to Voltaire, whose constitution was feeble: but the result with him was, his voluminous works; and with her, a degree of scientific knowledge surpassing that attained by almost every other adept of the day. Her essays were full of most abstruse reasoning, and written in a clear and elegant style. Madame de Graffigny had the highest opinion of her understanding. "I have been reading her dissertation on fire; it is written with admirable clearness, precision, and force of argument. I beg Voltaire's pardon, but it is far superior to his. What a woman! How little do I feel beside her! If my body grew as small, I could pass through a key-hole. When women do write, they surpass men; but it requires centuries to form a woman like this." Unfortunately, all this talent was darkened by a vehement and irritable temper. By degrees the truth became manifest, that these sages quarrelled violently. In madame de Graffigny's account, some of these disputes are very whimsical. These are trifles; but they display the inner nature of the man better than more important events, and deserve record. Voltaire was writing the "Age of Louis XIV.," in which he took great pride and pleasure, although from the tyranny then existing in France, the publishing of it would have doomed him to the Bastille. Madame du Chatelet locked up the manuscript, and would not let him finish it. "He is dying to do so," madame de Graffigny writes; "it is the work, of all his, which he prefers. She justifies herself by saying there is little pleasure in writing a book that cannot be printed. I exhort him to go on, and to be satisfied with the immortality he will gain. He said, yesterday, that assuredly he would finish it, but not here. She turns his head with her geometry; she likes nothing else." — "One day, being indisposed, the lady could not write; so she went to bed, and sent for me, saying

that Voltaire would read his tragedy of 'Merope.' When he came, she took it into her head that he should change his coat. He objected, on the score that he might catch cold, but at last had the complaisance to send for his valet to get another coat. The servant could not be found. Voltaire thought himself let off. Not at all: she recommenced her persecution till Voltaire got angry. He said a few words in English, and left the room. He was sent for; but replied he was taken ill. Adieu to 'Merope!' — I was furious. Presently a visitor came, and I said I would go to see Voltaire, and the lady told me to try to bring him back. I found him in excellent humour, quite forgetful of his illness; but it returned when we were sent for, and he was very sullen." Another time she writes: "I pity poor Voltaire, since he and his friend cannot agree. Ah, dear friend! where is there happiness on earth for mortals? We are always deceived by appearances: at a distance, we thought them the happiest people in the world; but, now that I am with them, I discern the truth."

Nor was the lady always the peccant person. On one occasion madame de Graffigny writes: "Voltaire is in a state resembling madness. He torments his friend till I am forced to pity her. She has made me her confidant. Voltaire is really mad. One day we were about to act a comedy—every one was ready, when the post came in; he received unpleasant letters: he burst forth into exclamations of anguish, and fell into a species of convulsions. Madame du Chatelet came to me with tears in her eyes, and begged me to put off the play. Yesterday he had an interval of quiet, and we acted. How strange that, with all his genius, he should be so absurd!"

Voltaire's disquiet arose from some defamatory attacks made on him by J. B. Rousseau and the abbé Desfontaines. We have seen the history of his intercourse with the former; it was unworthy the poet to revenge himself by libels. Voltaire had exerted his influence to save

Desfontaines when accused of a capital offence: he was repaid by the publication of calumnies. The attacks deserved contempt only; but Voltaire could not be brought to this opinion: "I must have reparation," he writes to a friend, "or I die dishonoured. Facts and the most shocking impostures are in question. You know not to what a degree the abbé Desfontaines is the oracle of the provinces. I am told that he is despised in Paris; yet his 'Observations' sell better than any other work. My silence drives him to despair, you say. Ah, how little do you know him! He will take my silence as a mark of submission; and I shall be disgraced by the most despicable man alive, without the smallest act of revenge — without justifying myself."

With these feelings he thought it necessary to write a defence. He proposed, at one time, entering on a law-suit. And, to add to his troubles, his friend Thiriot acted a weak, tergiversating part. Weak in health, irritated in temper by excessive application, he was in a state of too great excitement to judge calmly and act with dignity. For six months every occupation was postponed to his desire of vengeance; a serious attack of illness was the consequence. With this unfortunate susceptibility when defamed, we must contrast his patience under every other species of annoyance, and his constant benevolence. He suffered various pecuniary losses at this time, but never complained, nor ceased to benefit several literary men who had no resource except in his generosity.

To return to Cirey and its letter-writing guest. Madame de Graffigny's own turn for suffering came at last. The bigotry and severity of the French government with regard to the press, while cardinal Fleuri was minister, kept Voltaire and his friend in a continual state of uneasiness. Twice since his retirement to Cirey he had been obliged to fly to Holland to escape a *lettre de cachet*; and, meanwhile, he could not resist writing satires on religion and government, which he read to

his friends; and, their existence becoming known, the cardinal was on the alert. He had declared that if his burlesque of the "Pucelle" appeared, the author should end his days in the Bastille. Madame du Chatelet was more cautious and more fearful than Voltaire himself; and the imprudence of the latter, and the frightful evils that impended, did any treacherous friend either lay hands on any portion of the manuscript, or have a memory retentive enough to write it after it was read aloud, is in some degree an excuse for the otherwise unpardonable liberty she took to waylay, open, and read the letters of her guests. Madame de Graffigny had been delighted with a canto of "Joan," and sent a sketch of its plan in a letter to her friend. M. Devaux, in answer, simply replied, "The canto of 'Joan' is charming." The letter containing these words was opened by madame du Chatelet. Her terror distorted the meaning of the phrase, and represented in frightful colours the evil that would ensue; for she fancied that madame de Graffigny had in some manner possessed herself of, and sent to Lunéville, a canto of a poem so forbidden and guarded, that she had prevented Voltaire from communicating any portion of it to the prince royal of Prussia, lest any accidental discovery should be made. The storm broke unexpectedly and frightfully. Voltaire learnt and shared his friend's apprehensions. As a means of discovering the extent of the mischief, he, unexpectedly, the same evening, after madame de Graffigny had retired to her room, and was occupied writing letters, visited her there, saying, that he was ruined, and that his life was in her hands; and in reply to her expressions of astonishment, informed her that a hundred copies of one of the cantos of "Joan" were about in the world, and that he must fly to Holland, — to the end of the world — for safety; that M. du Chatelet was to set out for Lunéville; and that she must write to her friend Devaux to collect all the copies. Madame de Graffigny, charmed that she had an opportunity of obliging her kind host, assured him of

her zeal, and expressed her sorrow that such an accident should happen while she was his guest. On this, Voltaire became furious: "No tergiversation, madam," he cried. "You sent the canto!" Her counter-asseverations were of no avail — she believed herself the most unlucky person in the world that the suspicion should fall on her. In vain she protested. Voltaire at length asserted that Devaux had read the canto sent by her to various persons, and that madame du Chatelet had the proof in her pocket: her justification was not attended to by the angry poet, who declared that he was irretrievably ruined. In the midst of this frightful scene, which had lasted an hour, madame du Chatelet burst into the room: her violence, her abuse, and insulting expressions overwhelmed her poor guest. Voltaire in vain endeavoured to calm her. At length madame de Graffigny was informed of the cause of the tumult and accusation; she was shown the phrase in her correspondent's letter,—"The canto of 'Joan' is charming;"—she understood and explained its meaning. Voltaire believed her on the instant, and made a thousand apologies. His friend was less placable. Madame de Graffigny was obliged to promise to write for her own letter containing the account of the canto of the poem, to prove her innocence. She did this; and till it came all her letters were opened: she was treated with haughtiness by the lady, and remained shut up in her own room, solitary and sad; for, to crown her misfortunes, the poor woman had not a sous in the world, and could not escape from a place where she was exposed to so much insult. At length her letter was returned. Madame du Chatelet took care to waylay it, and satisfied herself by reading it; and then, a few days after, she apologised to her unfortunate guest; and, fearful, indeed, of her ill report on the subject, became remarkably civil and kind. Voltaire conducted himself much better. "I believe," madame de Graffigny writes, "that he was entirely ignorant of the practice of opening my letters; he

appeared to believe my simple word, and saw the illness I suffered, in consequence, with regret. He often visited me in my room, shed tears, and said that he was miserable at being the cause of my suffering. He has never once entered my room without the humblest and most pathetic apologies; he redoubled his care that I should be well attended; he even said that madame du Chatelet was a terrible woman — that she had no flexibility of heart, though it was good. In short, I have every reason to be content with Voltaire."

Such was the paradise of Cirey. The arduous study and ill health of Voltaire, the mental labours of his friend, their very accomplishments and wit, tended, probably, to irritate tempers, irritable in themselves. As to the poem, the cause of the storm, it had certainly better never have been written than occasion so much fear, and pain, and misconduct. We confess we have never read it. Its framework is indecency and ridicule of sacred things; chiefly, indeed, of the legends of the saints, which is more excusable; but still the whole is conceived in bad taste. We cannot understand the state of manners when such a poem could be read aloud to women; and we feel that we are scarcely fair judges of persons living in a system and actuated by motives so contrary to our own: so that, while we thank God we are not like them, we must be indulgent to faults which we have not any temptation to commit.

Voltaire's residence at Cirey was marked by the commencement of his correspondence with Frederic the Great, then prince royal of Prussia. It is well known that this sovereign passed a youth of great suffering — that he was imprisoned for an endeavour to escape from the state of servitude to which his father reduced him. His dearest friend was executed before his eyes, and measures taken that he himself should be condemned to death. To avoid a recurrence of these misfortunes, he lived in a most retired manner during the remainder of his father's life; given up to the cultivation of poetry and the study of philosophy. He shared the universal

admiration entertained of Voltaire's genius, and his noble daring in breaking down the obstacles which the government and clergy of France threw in the way of the diffusion of knowledge, and his resolution in devoting his life to authorship. He addressed a letter to him at Circy, requesting a correspondence. Voltaire could not fail of being highly flattered by a prince, the heir to a throne, who wrote to him that "Cirey should be his Delphos, and his letters oracles." Voltaire was far from being behindhand in compliments. He writes: "I shed tears of joy on reading your letter — I recognise a prince who will assuredly be the delight of the human race. I am in every way astonished: you speak like Trajan, you write like Pliny, and you express yourself in French as well as our best writers. What a difference between men! Louis XIV. was a great king— I respect his memory; but he had not your humanity, nor spoke French as well. I have seen his letters; he did not know the orthography of his own language. Berlin will be, under your auspices, the Athens of Germany — perhaps of Europe." The compliments on both sides were to a great degree sincere. Frederic shared the enthusiastic, almost, worship in which Voltaire was then generally held — and Voltaire regarding sovereigns and princes as powerful enemies, or at best as mischievous animals, whom it was necessary to stroke into innocuousness, was carried away by his delight in finding one who adopted his own principles — looked up to him as a master, and added to the value of his admiration, the fact of being himself a man of genius. After Voltaire had quarrelled with him, he spoke in a jocular tone of their mutual flattery; but still in a way that shows how deeply it sank at the time. "The prince," he writes, "employed his leisure in writing to the literary men of France, and the principal burden of his correspondence fell on me. I received letters in verse, metaphysical, historical, and political. He treated me as a divine man; I called him Solomon; epithets which cost us nothing. Some

of these follies have been printed among my works; but, fortunately, not the thirtieth part. I took the liberty to send him a very beautiful writing desk; he was kind enough to present me with some trifles in amber; and the coffee-house wits of Paris fancied, with horror, that my fortune was made. He sent a young Courlander, named Keiserling,—no bad writer of French verses himself,— from the confines of Pomerania, to us at Cirey. We gave him a fête, and a splendid illumination in which the cipher of the prince was hung with lamps, with the device, "The Hope of the Human Race." In his pique, Voltaire speaks too slightingly. Had he not been a prince, the correspondence of Frederic was worth having; it is full of good sense and philosophical remark. It was a more disagreeable task to correct his verses. Yet these are by no means bad; they are nearly as good as Voltaire's own. There is less pretension, but often more spirit. The whole mass has no real claim to be called poetry; and in these days nobody reads either: but when they were written, and had the gloss of novelty, and the interest of passing events and living men appended, they were at least respectable specimens of a talent, which in its own sphere could attain much higher things.

The residence at Cirey was broken up by the necessity of attending to a lawsuit of madame du Chatelet at Brussels, and she and her husband and Voltaire proceeded thither. At this period Frederic succeeded to the throne of Prussia. The demonstrations of his friendship for Voltaire continued as fervent as ever. "See in me only, I entreat you," he writes, "a zealous citizen, a somewhat sceptical philosopher, but a truly faithful friend. For God's sake write to me simply as a man; join with me in despising titles, names, and all exterior splendour." Voltaire replied, "Your majesty orders me, when I write, to think of him less as a king than as a man. This is a command after my own heart. I know not how to treat a king; but I am quite at my ease with a man whose head and

1740. Ætat. 46.

heart are full of love for the human race." Frederic, now that he was emancipated from his father's control, was most eager to see Voltaire. He asked him to visit him. Voltaire considered his friendship with madame du Chatelet as of more worth than the protection of a king; for although, through vivacity of temper and absence of self-control, they quarrelled, there was a deep feeling of mutual kindness and sympathy on both sides. The king had been ready to lavish compliments on the "divine Emily;" but his indifference to women, and his many and important occupations, made him shrink from receiving a French court lady, full of wit, caprice, and self-importance. He wrote: "If Emily must accompany Apollo, I consent; but if I can see you alone, I should prefer it." It ended in Frederic's forming the plan of including Brussels in a tour he made, and visiting his friend there. Voltaire's own account of their interview is full of spirit and pleasantry; showing how, in reality, a Frenchman, accustomed to the splendour and etiquette of his native court, could ill comprehend the simplicity and poverty of Prussia. He writes: "The king's ambassador extraordinary to France arrived at Brussels; as soon as he alighted at an inn, he sent me a young man, whom he had made his page, to say that he was too tired to pay me a visit, but begged me to come to him, and that he had a rich and magnificent present for me from the king, his master. 'Go quickly,' cried madame du Chatelet, 'I dare say he brings you the crown jewels.' I hurried off, and found the ambassador, who, instead of portmanteau, had behind his carriage a quarter of wine, belonging to the late king, which the reigning sovereign ordered me to drink. I exhausted myself in protestations of surprise and gratitude for this liquid mark of his majesty's goodness, substituted for the solid ones he had given me a right to expect, and I shared the wine with Camas. My Solomon was then at Strasbourg. The fancy had taken him while visiting his long and narrow dominions, which reached from

Gueldres to the Baltic sea, to visit, incognito, the frontiers and troops of France. He took the name, at Strasbourg, of the count du Four, a rich Bohemian nobleman. He sent me, at Brussels, an account of his travels, half prose, half verse, in the style of Bachaumont and Chapelle; that is, as near the style as a king of Prussia could attain; telling of bad roads and the passport he was obliged to give himself, which, having with him a seal with the arms of Prussia, he easily fabricated; and the surprise his party excited — some taking them for sovereigns, others for swindlers. From Strasbourg he visited his states in Lower Germany, and sent word that he would visit me at Brussels incognito. We prepared a good residence for him; but falling ill at the little castle of Meuse, two leagues from Clêves, he wrote to beg that I would make the first advances. I went, therefore, to present my most profound homage. Maupertuis, who already had his own views, and was possessed by a mania to be president of an academy, had presented himself, and lodged with Algarotti and Keyserling in a loft of this palace. I found a single soldier as guard at the gate. The privy counsellor Rambonet, minister of state, was walking about the court, blowing his fingers; he had on large dirty linen ruffles, a hat full of holes, and an old judge's wig, which on one side reached to his pockets, and on the other scarcely touched his shoulder. I was told, and truly, that this man was charged with important state affairs. I was conducted to his majesty's apartment, where I saw only four walls. At length, by the light of a candle, I perceived, in a closet, a truckle bed, two feet and a half wide, on which was a little man, wrapped in a dressing-gown of coarse blue cloth. It was the king, trembling beneath an old counterpane, in a violent access of fever. I bowed to him, and began my acquaintance by feeling his pulse, as if I had been his first physician. When the access was over, he dressed and went to supper with me, Algarotti, Keyserling, Maupertuis, and his minister to

the States General. We conversed on the immortality of the soul, free will, and Plato's "Androgynes." Counsellor Rambonet meanwhile mounted a hack, and, after riding all night, arrived at the gates of Liège, where he made a requisition in the name of the king, his master, which two thousand of his troops helped him to enforce. Frederic even charged me with writing a manifesto, which I did as well as I could, not doubting that a king with whom I supped, and who called me his friend, must be in the right. The affair was soon arranged, through the payment of a million, which he exacted in ducats, which served to indemnify him for the expense of his journey to Strasbourg, of which he had complained in his poetic letter. I grew attached to him, for he had talent and grace; and besides, he was a king, which, considering human weakness, is always a great fascination. Generally we literary men flatter kings; but he flattered me, while abbé Desfontaines and other rascals defamed me once a week at Paris.

"The king of Prussia, before his father's death, had written a work against the principles of Machiavelli. If Machiavelli had had a prince for disciple, he would have recommended him, in the first place, to write against him; but the prince royal did not understand this sort of finesse. He had written in good faith at a time when he was not sovereign; and his father inspired him with no partiality for despotic power. He sincerely praised moderation and justice, and in his enthusiasm regarded every usurpation as a crime. He had sent me the manuscript to correct and publish. I now began to feel remorse at printing the "Anti-Machiavel," while the king of Prussia, with an hundred millions in his treasury, took one, by means of counsellor Rambonet, from the poor inhabitants of Liège. I suspected that my Solomon would not stop there. His father had left sixty-six thousand four hundred excellent soldiers. He augmented the number, and seemed eager to make use of them. I represented to

him that it was not quite right to print his book at a time when he might be reproached for violating its precepts. He permitted me to stop the edition. I went to Holland entirely to do him this little service; but the bookseller asked so much money in compensation, that the king, who in his heart was not sorry to see himself in print, preferred being so for nothing, rather than to pay not to be."

We have extracted this whole account as highly characteristic, and as explanatory of much that followed. Frederic loved and enjoyed talent, and was himself a man of genius; he was simple-minded as a German; unaccustomed to show and luxury; but he was a king and a soldier. He was young and ambitious. Voltaire laughed at his economy, ridiculed his plainness, saw through his pretensions to liberal opinions, and jested wittily on their friendship. Yet, withal, he was flattered by it. He saw a refuge and a support against the persecutions he feared in his own country; and though he would have preferred that a sovereign who called him friend had been more royal in outward show, he was forced to be satisfied that though badly dressed and meanly attended, yet he was really a king, with millions in his coffres, and thousands of soldiers at his command, and, above all, a man of genius. "He is the most delightful man in the world," he writes, "and would be sought by every one, even were he not a king: philosophical without austerity, full of gentleness, complaisance, and agreeable qualities; forgetting that he is a sovereign as soon as he is with his friends, and so forgetting, that it required an effort of memory to recollect that he was one." Such was the impression which the young king made on his older friend, who had been accustomed to courts and royalty. But still he felt that the friend of a king is not half as independent in the royal palace as in another kingdom. Probably madame du Chatelet's admirable understanding helped to keep him firm; at any rate, while she lived he declined all Frederic's invitations,

and declared his tie of friendship with the "divine Emily" paramount to every other.

Voltaire and madame du Chatelet had agreed to vary their solitude at Cirey by visits to the metropolis. The leisure afforded by the seclusion of the country was congenial to labour. Far from the society and interruptions of Paris, they could both devote their whole minds to the subjects on which they were occupied; but they found difficulty in getting books. It was impossible at a distance from the capital for Voltaire to have access to the state papers necessary for the historical works he had in hand, or for the lady to keep up that communication with men of letters which, in matters of science particularly, is necessary to any one ambitious of extending and confirming discoveries. Yet the change was to be regretted. The vivacity of Voltaire's temper had caused him to be disturbed by the attacks of his enemies in his retirement. In the thick of society these attacks were more multifarious and stinging; and added to this, his reputation in the capital for a wit, could only be kept up by a sort of small money of authorship, so to speak, which frittered away the treasures of his mind.

The death of the emperor Charles VI. plunged Europe in war. France interfered to cause the elector of Bavaria to be chosen emperor, and attacked Maria Theresa of Austria, daughter of Charles VI. The king of Prussia, a potentate who had not yet figured in the wars of Europe, desirous of taking advantage of the distressed state of the empire, seized on Silesia. Twice Voltaire was employed by his court to sound the intentions of his royal correspondent, and to influence him to ally himself with France. The first mission of this sort that he undertook was at the request of cardinal Fleuri.

Cardinal Fleuri had been the author's friend in his early days. Voltaire took great pleasure in conversing with him, and collecting his anecdotes on the reign of Louis XIV. The cardinal was a timid man; the scope

of his policy as minister, was to keep France at peace and Paris tranquil; to prevent all movement in the public mind, and to suppress literary influence, whether it tended to enlarge the boundaries of human knowledge, or to remark upon the events and personages of the day. He kept a tight hand over Voltaire. Several *lettres de cachet* had been issued against him, and he had declared imprisonment in the Bastille should punish any future literary imprudence. Voltaire could only keep up a semblance of kindness and toleration by giving every outward mark of submission. It was matter of pride to him when he was applied to by the minister to visit Frederic, and learn his real intentions with regard to his attack on Silesia. His mission was secret; so that it was supposed that he had taken refuge in Prussia from some new persecution; while Frederic himself, not well comprehending his sudden apparition, after his frequent refusals, guessed that it was connected with politics, and showed himself for a moment dubious of his integrity. But this cloud was soon dissipated. The king tried to tempt the poet to remain. He was firm in his refusal. "I have quitted a brilliant and advantageous establishment," he writes; "I received the most flattering offers, and great regret was expressed because I would not accept them; but how could courts and kings and emolument outweigh a ten years' friendship: they would scarcely console me, did this friendship fail me." Nor did friendship alone recal him; he was eager for the applause of a Parisian audience. Any one who reads his letters, will perceive how Voltaire was wrapt up in his writings; enthusiasm could alone sustain him through so much labour. He was desirous that the tragedy of 'Mahomet' should be acted; he was allowed to choose his own censor: he selected Crebillon, but Crebillon refused the licence; and an intimacy of thirty years ended in a quarrel.

To compensate for this disappointment, Voltaire brought out this tragedy at Lille. He found La Noue there, who was well fitted for the part of Mahomet;

and Clairon in her youth, who took the part of Palmyre. During an interval between the acts, a letter was brought to Voltaire, announcing the gain of the battle of Molwitz; he rose and read it aloud from his box. The applause redoubled; and he afterwards said, jestingly, that the victory of Molwitz had insured the success of "Mahomet." The tragedy was approved even by the clergy at Lille, and Fleuri, when he read it, saw no objection to its being acted. It was brought out in Paris under brilliant auspices; but the clergy formed a cabal; it was declared to be a covert attack on the Christian religion, and Fleuri weakly begged the author to withdraw it after the second representation.

1743. Ætat. 49. When cardinal Fleuri died, and Louis XV. declared he would have no other first minister, Voltaire hoped to establish his influence on surer foundations, through his long-established friendship with the duke de Richelieu. This libertine, but not unambitious, noble sought to lay the foundations of his power by any means, however disgraceful. By giving the king a mistress of his own choosing, he hoped to rule his sovereign; and while the duchess de Chateauroux lived, he possessed considerable power. One of the first advantages Voltaire wished to reap was, to succeed to the seat in the academy, vacant by the death of cardinal Fleuri.

To understand the importance Voltaire attached to success in this endeavour, we must consider his views and his position. The chief aim of his life was to diffuse in France that knowledge and freedom of discussion which was permitted in England, but which was barred out of his country with a rigorous and persecuting spirit. At the same time, desirous of living in his native land, and to reap there the fruits of his labours in the applause of his countrymen, he wished to insure his personal security. As a chief means to this end, he believed it necessary to gain the favour of influential persons about the sovereign, and to make himself one of a powerful society, such as formed the French academy. Voltaire understood his countrymen. He knew how a

word can sway — how a jest could rule them. His own temper was vivacious and irritable. He never spared an enemy. While accusing Boileau and Molière for holding up the poetasters of their day to ridicule, did any of the *literati* attack him, he defended himself with acrimonious sarcasm and pertinacious abuse. He spared no epithet of contempt, no vehemence of condemnation, nor any artful manœuvre, so to obtain the advantage. While he thus sought to annihilate his foes, and to secure himself, the gates of the Bastille yawned in view, and by the tremour which the sight inspired, added that bitterness to his sensations which the fear of disaster inspires. These were the causes of the virulence of his diatribes — of the sting of his epigrams in which he devotes Piron and others to everlasting ridicule. It was on this account that he sought to be a member of the academy.

The moment he began to canvass for the vacant seat in the academy, a violent cabal was formed to oppose him. Maurepas, secretary of state, an excellent man, but narrow-minded, was the moving spring of the opposition. He put forward a Theatin monk, named Boyer, as his agent. This man declared that the deceased cardinal's empty chair could only be filled properly by a bishop. He found some difficulty in finding a prelate who chose to undertake the invidious part; one was at last found, and Voltaire lost his election. The same scene was renewed when another vacancy recurred, during the following year. In some degree the poet was consoled by the success of the tragedy of "Merope." The audience were transported by enthusiasm; they perceived the author in a box — they insisted on his coming forward. The young and beautiful duchess de Villars was with him. She was called upon to embrace the poet; at first she was embarrassed by the singular part she was called on to act, but, recovering herself, obeyed the call of the pit with the grace that distinguished a high-born Frenchwoman. Voltaire might well desire to achieve success with an

audience of his countrymen, when such were the tokens he received of triumph.

The king of Prussia, meanwhile, having exhausted his finances by war, and gained two provinces, found it eligible to conclude a peace with Maria Theresa; a peace, detrimental to the interests of France, which was thus left to carry on the war single-handed. It became matter of policy to induce Frederic to infringe a treaty scarcely signed. The duke de Richelieu requested Voltaire to be the negotiator. Again his mission was secret. He pretended to renounce his country, disgusted by the cabal carried on by Boyer against him, and he had the appearance of applying to Frederic for refuge and defence against the injustice he met in his native country. Voltaire's own account of this negotiation is written in his usual jesting, sarcastic style; he made a joke of the bishop, his successful rival; and when Frederic answered by a deluge of pleasantries on the subject, he took care to make his letters public. The bishop of Mirepoix complained to the king that he was made to pass for a fool at foreign courts; but Louis XV. replied that it was a thing agreed upon, and that he must not mind it. Voltaire remarks that this reply was opposed to Louis's usual character, and that it appeared extraordinary. But the king probably spoke in the innocence of his heart, announcing a mere fact, that the bishop's reputation for talent was to be sacrificed for the good of the state. Indeed, there is a letter from Voltaire to his immediate employer, Amelot, secretary for foreign affairs, which shows that he by no means felt easy with regard to the light in which Louis might view his conduct, and excuses the style of his correspondence with Frederic. "There are in his notes and in mine," he writes, "some bold rhymes, which cannot hurt a king, though they may an individual. He hopes that I may be forced to accept his offers, which hitherto I have refused, and take up my abode at the court of Prussia. He hopes to gain me by losing me in France; but I swear to you I would rather live in a

Swiss village than gain at this price the dangerous favour of a king."

After some delay, occasioned by the journeys of the king of Prussia, during which time Voltaire did good service for his court at the Hague, he arrived at Berlin, and was warmly welcomed. Fêtes, operas, suppers — all the amusements that Frederic could command, were put in requisition to please the illustrious and favoured guest. In the midst of these, the secret negotiation advanced. Voltaire had infinite tact, and could, like many of his countrymen, mingle the most serious designs with frivolous amusements, and pursue undeviatingly his own interests, while apparently given up to philosophical disquisitions or witty discussions. In the midst, therefore, of easy and jocular conversation, Voltaire discovered the real state of things, which consisted in the king of Prussia's desire to embroil Louis XV. with England. "Let France declare war against England," said Frederic, "and I march." This sufficed for the subtle emissary. He returned to Paris, and negotiations ensued which terminated in a new treaty between France and Prussia, and the following spring Frederic invaded Bohemia with a hundred thousand men. Voltaire, however, reaped no benefit from his zeal. The king's mistress, the duchess de Chateauroux, was angry that she had not been consulted. She managed to obtain the dismission of M. Amelot, secretary for foreign affairs, under whose direction Voltaire had acted, and he was enveloped in the disgrace, that is to say, he gained no court smiles, nor any solid compensation, for his trouble.

His life was now passed between Paris and Cirey — society and solitude. He and the du Chatelets shared the same house in the capital; their studies and their amusements were in common. We are told * that on one occasion, when madame du Chatelet went to court, and engaged in play, during which she lost a great deal of money, Voltaire told her in English that she was

* Mémoires de Longchamp.

being cheated. The words were understood by others who were present, and the poet thought it prudent to absent himself for a time. He asked refuge from the duchess du Maine at Sceaux. Here he passed two months in the strictest retreat; and when danger was past, he repaid his hostess by remaining in her chateau, and contributing to her recreation by getting up plays, and writing for her. "Zadig" and others of his tales were composed on this occasion. Operas, plays, concerts, and balls varied the amusements. Madame du Chatelet and Voltaire took parts in these theatricals. The lady was an admirable actress, as well as musician: she shone in comedy, where her gaiety, grace, and vivacity had full play. Voltaire was also a good actor. The part of Cicero in his own tragedy of "Rome Sauvée" was his favourite part. At other times, leaving these pleasures, he and his friend retired to Cirey and to labour. We have an amusing account of several of their migrations, from the pen of Longchamp, who, from being the valet of madame du Chatelet, became elevated into the secretary of Voltaire. There is a great contrast between this man's account, and the letters before quoted of madame de Graffigny. In both descriptions, we find mentioned the vivacity and petulance both of the poet and his friend; but the darker shadows thrown by irritability and quarrelling, do not appear in the pages of Longchamp; and, above all, the fair disciple of Newton is delineated in far more agreeable colours. "Madame du Chatelet," he writes, "passed the greater part of the morning amidst her books and her writings, and she would never be interrupted. But when she left her study, she was no longer the same woman — her serious countenance changed into one expressive of gaiety, and she entered with ardour into all the pleasures of society. Although she was then forty, she was the first to set amusement on foot, and to enliven it by her wit and vivacity." Nor does he make any mention of the violence and ill-humour from which her guest suffered so piteously. "When

not studying," he remarks, "she was always active, lively, and good-humoured." At Cirey, she was equally eager to afford amusement to her friends. "When the report of her arrival," writes Longchamp, "was spread through the neighbouring villages, the gentry of the country around came to pay their respects. They were all well received; those who came from a distance were kept for several weeks at the chateau. To amuse both herself and her guests, madame du Chatelet set on foot a theatre. She composed farces and proverbs; Voltaire did the same; and the parts were distributed among the guests. A sort of stage had been erected at the end of a gallery, formed by planks placed upon empty barrels, while the side scenes were hung with tapestry; a lustre and some branches lighted the gallery and the theatre; there were a few fiddles for an orchestra, and the evenings passed in a very gay and amusing manner. Often the actors, without knowing it, were made to turn their own characters into ridicule, for the greater gratification of the audience. Madame du Chatelet wrote parts for this purpose, nor did she spare herself, and often represented grotesque personages. She could lend herself to every division, and always succeeded."

From this scene of gaiety, at once rustic and refined, the pair proceeded to the court of king Stanislaus at Luneville. Here Voltaire employed himself in writing during the morning, and, as usual, the evening was given up to amusement. The theatricals were renewed; all was gaiety and good humour. The marquis du Chatelet, passing through Luneville, on his way to join the army, was enchanted to find his wife in such high favour at king Stanislaus' court.

Voltaire left the gay scene to overlook the bringing out of his tragedy of "Semiramis." In this play he endeavoured to accustom his countrymen to greater boldness of situation and stage effect. It was necessary to banish that portion of the audience, the dandies of the day, who, seated on the stage itself, at once destroyed 1748. Ætat. 54.

all scenic illusion, and afforded too narrow a space for the actors. A formidable cabal opposed these innovations, headed by Piron and Crebillon; and Voltaire, himself, was obliged to have recourse to means which had been unworthy of him under other circumstances, and to place a number of resolute friends in the pit, to oppose the adverse party. The piece was successful, and the poet eager to return to Luneville. He was suffering greatly in his health. During his stay in Paris, he had been attacked by low fever; and his busy life in the capital, where his days were given up to society, and his nights to authorship, exhausted the vital powers. Notwithstanding his suffering, he resolved to set out, and proceeded as far as Chalons, where he was obliged to give in, and take to his bed. The bishop and intendant of Chalons visited him; they sent him a physician; but, without showing outward opposition, Voltaire followed none of his prescriptions, and endeavoured to get rid of the intruders. He felt his danger; he entreated his confidential servant, Longchamps not to abandon him, and, as he said, to remain to cover his body with earth when he should expire. His fever and delirium increased, and his resolution not to take the remedies prescribed was firm: every one expected to see him die; he, himself, anticipated death, and gave his secretary instructions how to act. On the sixth day, though apparently as ill as ever, he resolved to proceed on his journey, declaring that he would not die at Chalons. He was lifted into his carriage; his secretary took his place beside him; he did not speak, and was so wan and feeble, that Longchamp feared that he would never arrive alive: but as they went on, he grew better; sleep and appetite returned; he was much recovered when they reached Luneville; the presence of madame du Chatelet reanimated him; a few days with her caused all his gaiety to return, and he forgot his sufferings and danger.

This appears to have been a very happy portion of Voltaire's life. His friendship for madame du Cha-

telet was ardent and sincere. Her talents were the origin of their sympathy in tastes and pursuits; her gaiety animated his life with a succession of pleasures necessary to compose and amuse his mind after intense study; her good sense enabled her to be his adviser and support when calumny and scandal disturbed, as was easily done, his equanimity. Voltaire, when writing, was absorbed by his subject; this enthusiasm inspired and sustained him. It allowed him to labour hard, and made him put his whole soul into every word he penned. His friend participated in his eagerness; and by entering earnestly into all his literary plans, imparted to them a charm which he appreciated at its full value. This friend he was about to lose for ever; but he did not anticipate the misfortune.

A portion of the following year was spent at Paris and Cirey, and they again visited Luneville; for king Stanislaus had invited them again to join his court. Pleasure was once more the order of the day. Every one in the palace was eager to contribute to the king's amusement; and he was desirous that all round him should be happy. In the midst of this routine of gaiety, the industry of Voltaire surprises us. He wrote several tragedies at this period, and his letters are full of expressions marking the eagerness of authorship, and the many hours he devoted to composition. Emulation, joined to great disdain for his rival, spurred him on. He was mortified and indignant at the praise bestowed on Crebillon by the Parisians; and he took the very subjects treated by this tragedian, believing that, thus brought into immediate contrast, his grander conceptions and more classic style would at once crush the pretender. "I have written 'Catiline,'" he writes, "in eight days; and the moment I finished, I began 'Electra.' For the last twenty years I have been rendered indignant by seeing the finest subject of antiquity debased by a miserable love affair,—by two pair of lovers, and barbarous poetry; nor was I less afflicted by the cruel injustice done to Cicero. In a word, I believed 1749. Ætat. 9.

that I was called upon by my vocation to avenge Cicero and Sophocles — Rome and Greece — from the attacks of a barbarian."

This ardour for composition, and these pleasures, were suddenly arrested by the afflicting event of madame du Chatelet's death. She died soon after her confinement, unexpectedly, when all danger seemed past. Whatever might have been the disputes of the friends, these did not shake their friendship; and if they clouded, at intervals, the happiness they derived, they left no evil trace behind. Voltaire was plunged in the deepest affliction; the expressions he uses mark the truth of his regrets. "I do not fear my grief," he writes to his friend, the marquis d'Argental; "I do not fly from objects that speak to me of her. I love Cirey; and although I cannot bear Luneville, where I lost her in so frightful a manner, yet the places which she adorned are dear to me. I have not lost a mistress; I have lost the half of myself, — a soul for which mine was made, — a friend of twenty years. I feel as the most affectionate father would towards an only daughter. I love to find her image everywhere; to converse with her husband and her son." — "I have tried to return to 'Catiline;' but I have lost the ardour I felt when I could show her an act every two days. Ideas fly from me; I find myself, for hours together, unable to write; without a thought for my work: one idea occupies me day and night." To these laments he adds her eulogy, in another letter, with which we may conclude the subject. Her errors were the effect of the times in which she lived, and of an ardent temper. We would deprecate any return to a state of society that led the wisest into such grievous faults, but we will not defraud the victim of the system of the praise which, on other scores, she individually merited.* "A woman," writes

* It is difficult to decide on madame du Chatelet's character. With regard to the immorality of her *liaison* with Voltaire, we will merely refer to the clever preface of the English editor to madame du Duffand's correspondence with Horace Walpole, in which the state of society in that age is so well described; and only remark, that such *was* the system, that

Voltaire, "who translated and explained Newton, and translated Virgil, without betraying in her conversation that she had achieved these prodigies; a woman who never spoke ill of any one, and never uttered a falsehood; a friend, attentive and courageous in her friendship: in a word, a great woman, whom the common run of women only knew by her diamonds and dress. Such must I weep till the end of my life."

After this sorrowful event Voltaire established himself in Paris. The house which he and Madame du Chatelet rented conjointly, he now took entirely himself. He invited his widowed niece, madame Denis, to preside over his establishment. At first he continued plunged in grief; he saw no one but count D'Argental and the duke of Richelieu, who were among his oldest friends. One or the other, or both, passed the evenings with him, and tried to distract his mind from its regrets. They sought to awaken in him his theatrical tastes, which were strong, and which, if once roused, would effectually draw him from solitude. Voltaire at last showed sparks of the old fire; other friends were brought about him; he was implored to bring out his newly written tragedies; he objected, on the score of the quarrel that subsisted between him and the actors of the Comédie Français, — he having endeavoured to improve their manner of acting, and they haughtily rejecting his instructions. This difficulty was got over by erecting a private theatre in his own house, and gathering together a number of actors chosen from

a devoted and enduring friendship for so great a man was considered highly respectable, even though that friendship militated against our stricter notions of social duties; it not being considered the business of any one to inquire into, or concern themselves with, a question that related only to the persons immediately implicated. With regard to madame du Chatelet's general character, she was unpopular through the vehemence of her temper, and even the ardour with which she devoted herself to study. She had several of the faults attributed to literary women, which arise from their not having the physical strength to go through great intellectual labour without suffering from nervous irritation. In other respects she was evidently generous and sincere. Her judgment was sound; her common sense clear and steady. She was witty and vivacious, and had as much to bear from Voltaire's petulance, whimsicalness, and vehemence, as he from her more imperious temper.

various private companies; for, as in the time of Molière, the sons of the shopkeepers in Paris often formed companies together, and got up theatricals. It was thus that Voltaire became acquainted with Le Kain, who has left us an interesting account of his intercourse with the illustrious poet.

Le Kain was the son of a goldsmith. Voltaire saw him act, and, perceiving his talent, begged him to call upon him. "The pleasure caused by this invitation," the actor writes, "was even greater than my surprise. I cannot describe what passed within me at the sight of this great man, whose eyes sparkled with fire, imagination, and genius. I felt penetrated with respect, enthusiasm, admiration, and fear; while M. de Voltaire, to put an end to my embarrassment, embraced me, thanking God for having created a being who could move him to tears by his declamation." He then asked the young man various questions; and when Le Kain mentioned his intention of giving himself entirely up to the stage, in spite of his enthusiasm for the theatre, Voltaire strongly dissuaded him from adopting a profession held disreputable in his native country. He asked him to recite, but would not hear any verses but those of Racine. Le Kain had once acted in "Athalie," and he declaimed the first scene, while Voltaire, in a transport of enthusiasm, exclaimed, "Oh! what exquisite verses! and it is surprising that the whole piece is written with the same fervour and purity, from first scene to last, and that, throughout, the poetry is inimitable." And then, turning to the actor, he said, "I predict that, with that touching voice, you will one day delight all Paris, — but never appear upon a public stage." At the second interview Voltaire engaged Le Kain and his whole company to act at his own theatre, Le Kain himself taking up his residence in the house of the generous poet. Le Kain owed his success to him, and felt the warmest gratitude. "He is a faithful friend," he writes; "his temper is vehement, but his heart is good, and his soul sensitive and compassionate. Modest, in spite of the

praises lavished on him by kings, by literary men, and by the rest of the world. Profound and just in his judgment on the works of others; full of amenity, kindness, and grace, in the intercourse of daily life, he was inflexible in his aversion to those who had offended him. He was an admirable actor. I have seen him put new life into the part of Cicero, in the fourth act of 'Rome Sauvée,' when we brought out that piece at Sceaux, in the August of 1750. Nothing could be more true, more pathetic, more enthusiastic, than he was in this part." Voltaire instructed the actors when they performed his own tragedies; his criticisms were just, and given with that earnestness and vividness of illustration that marked the liveliness of his sensations. "Remember," he said to an actor who whined out the part of Brutus, "remember that you are Brutus, the firmest of Romans, and that you must not make him address the god Mars as if you were saying, "O holy Virgin! grant that I may gain a prize of a hundred francs in the lottery." He insisted with mademoiselle Dumesnil that she should put more energy into the part of Merope. "One must be possessed by the devil," said the actress, "to declaim with such vehemence." — "You are right," said Voltaire; "and one must be possessed to succeed in any art."

Voltaire passionately loved theatrical representations. The tragedies of Corneille, and, above all, of Racine, inspired him with sensations of the warmest delight. He wrote his own plays in transports of enthusiasm, and corrected them with intense labour. But he had a further intention in erecting his theatre; he aimed at popularity and at court favour, as a safeguard from persecution, and as insuring his personal safety if he should excite ministerial displeasure by any philosophical works. It was for this cause that he endeavoured to propitiate the new mistress of Louis XV., madame de Pompadour. He had known her before she attracted the king's attention; and after she became the royal mistress, she continued for a time on a familiar

footing with her old friend. Eager to form a party, and to insure her own popularity, madame de Pompadour patronised literature and the arts, and at first showed partiality for Voltaire; the courtiers followed her example with eager emulation, and the sovereign himself was induced to regard him with some show of favour. He named him gentleman in ordinary to his chamber, and historiographer of France, — places which Voltaire eagerly accepted, and regarded as so many bulwarks to resist the attacks of his enemies. The duties of the first-named place were, however, onerous, as they necessitated a frequent attendance at court; he was permitted to dispose of it, and he sold it for 30,000 francs; while, as a peculiar mark of favour, he was allowed to preserve the title and privileges.

He was, moreover, elected member of the academy; but he purchased this doubtful honour by the sacrifice of much honest pride. He was not elected till he addressed a letter full of professions of respect for the church and the Jesuits. No advancement would have induced him to this act; but he believed that it was necessary to secure his safety while he continued to inhabit the capital. At the same time, these concessions embittered his spirit, and added force to his sarcasms and hostility, when, by expatriation, he had secured his independence. When we consider, however, that his concessions were made in vain, we regret that any motive urged him to them; for if truth be the great aim of intellectual exertions, the more imperative that those who aspire to glory in the name of truth should rise far above subterfuge and disguise. While madame du Chatelet lived, he had occupied a more dignified position; and, in the retirement of Cirey, remained aloof from the intrigues necessary to curry favour with an uneducated, bigoted king, and his ignorant mistress. When his accomplished friend died, the versatile and ambitious poet sailed at first without pilot or rudder. What wonder that he was wrecked? and he deserves the more praise, when

he retrieved himself after wreck, and attained independence and dignity in his seclusion in Switzerland.

A member of the academy, and enjoying places at court, Voltaire, for a short interval, believed that he should reach the goal he desired, and become the dictator of the literary world, under the protection of his sovereign. He was soon undeceived: Louis remembered too well cardinal de Fleuri's lessons, not to regard him with distrust and dislike. Madame de Pompadour watched the glances of the royal eye, and guided herself by them. Crebillon was set up as Voltaire's successful rival: he felt his immeasurable superiority, and was filled with scorn at the attempt made to bring them on a level. He struggled at first; but still the court and people called out for Crebillon; and, in a fit of disgust, he accepted the reiterated invitation of the king of Prussia, hoping that a temporary absence might calm the attacks of his enemies, and awaken the partiality of the people.

Frederic received his friend with transports of joy. His undisguised delight, his earnest request that he would exchange Paris for Berlin permanently, the charm that his talents spread over the poet's life, and the security he enjoyed, were all alluring. Frederic spared no professions of friendship, no marks of real personal attachment; more than once he kissed the poet's hand, in a transport of admiration. This singular demonstration of affection from man to man, more singular from king to author, helped, with many others in addition, to enchain Voltaire. He, himself, assures us that they turned his head. "How could I resist," he writes, "a victorious king, a poet, a musician, a philosopher, who pretended to love me? I believed that I loved him. I arrived in Potzdam in the month of June, 1750. Astolpho was not better received in the palace of Alcina. To lodge in the apartment which the mareschal de Saxe had occupied, to have the king's cooks at my orders when I chose to eat in my own rooms, and his coachmen when I wished to drive out,

were the least favours shown me. The suppers were delightful. Unless I deceive myself, the conversation was full of wit and genius. The king displayed both; and what is strange, I never at any repast enjoyed more freedom. I studied two hours a day with his majesty; I corrected his works, taking care to praise greatly all that was good, while I erased all that was bad. I gave him a reason in writing for all my emendations, which composed a work on rhetoric and poetry for his use. He profited by it, and his genius was of more service to him than my lessons. I had no court to pay, no visits to make, no duties to fulfil. I established myself on an independent footing, and I can conceive nothing more agreeable than my situation."

With these feelings, it is not strange that he listened to his royal friend's request, that he should resign his places in the court of France, and accept that of chamberlain in Prussia, as well as a pension for his life and that of his niece, and that he should permanently fix himself in his royal friend's dominions; yet, while he accepted these offers, he had many qualms. Madame Denis, his neice, to whom he communicated his new plans, argued warmly against them. Her letter has not come down to us; but she evidently took a keen and true view of the annoyances and mortifications to which he might be exposed. She was acquainted with her uncle's irritable temper, — his unguarded conversation when carried away by the spirit of wit, — his vehemence when struggling against control. She felt, and truly, that a king accustomed to command was the last person to show indulgence for such foibles when they clashed with himself. She prophesied that Frederic would, in the end, be the death of his friend. Voltaire showed this letter to the king, and he, in answer, wrote one to the poet, the expressions of which won him entirely. "How," wrote Frederic, "could I cause the unhappiness of a man whom I esteem, whom I love, and who sacrifices for me his country, and all that is dear to man? I respect you as my master in eloquence, —

I love you as a virtuous friend. What slavery, what misfortune, what change can you fear in a country where you are as much esteemed as in your own, and with a friend who has a grateful heart? I promise you that you shall be happy here as long as you live."

Voltaire sent this letter to count d'Argental, whom he always named his guardian angel, as his apology for expatriating himself. "Judge," he writes, "whether I am excusable? I send you his letter, — you will think that you are reading one written by Trajan or Marcus Aurelius,—yet I am not the less agitated while I deliver myself over to fate, and throw myself, head foremost, into the whirlpool of destiny which absorbs all things. But how can I resist? How can I forget the barbarous manner with which I have been treated in my own country? You know what I have gone through. I enter port after a storm that has lasted thirty years. I enjoy the protection of a king; I find the conversation of a philosopher — the society of a delightful man — united in one, who, for the space of sixteen years, has exerted himself to comfort me in my misfortunes, and to shelter me from my enemies. All is to be feared for me in Paris; here I am sure of tranquillity: if I can answer for anything, it is for the character of the king of Prussia." He wrote with even more enthusiasm to his niece. "He is the most amiable of men; he is a king; it is a passion of sixteen years' standing; he has turned my head. I have the insolence to think that nature formed me for him. There is a singular conformity in our tastes. I forget that he is master of half Germany, and see in him only a good, a friendly man."

To establish the poet at his court, Frederic named him his chamberlain, and gave him the brevet of a pension of twenty thousand francs for himself, and four thousand for his niece, who was invited to come and take up her abode with her uncle at Potzdam. Before he accepted these bounties, it was necessary to obtain permission from his own sovereign, of whom he was

placeman and pensioner. Frederic himself wrote to solicit the consent of the king of France. To Voltaire's surprise, Louis showed displeasure. Monarchs are usually averse to any display of independence on the part of their subjects and servants. He accepted the poet's resignation of the place of historiographer, which Voltaire had hoped to keep, but permitted him to retain his title of gentleman in ordinary and his pension. Yet this was done in a manner that showed Voltaire that if he were forced to leave Prussia, his position in his native country would be more perilous and stormy than ever.

He felt, also, deeply disappointed in finding himself obliged to give up the idea of having his niece, Madame Denis, with him in Prussia. "The life we lead at Potzdam," he writes, "which pleases me, would drive a woman to despair; so I leave her my house in Paris, my plate, and my horses, and I add to her income." Still his niece and his friends were not content at his throwing himself so entirely into the power of Frederic, and their suggestions inspired a thousand doubts as to the prudence of his choice, especially when the severity of the winter made him feel that the climate was ill suited to his feeble constitution.

However, he manfully opposed himself to the objections raised against his choice, and the sufferings which the long icy winter caused him to endure. He devoted himself to authorship. His chief occupation was his "Age of Louis XIV.," of which he was justly proud. He felt that he could write with greater freedom while absent from France. "I shall here finish," he writes, "the 'Age of Louis XIV.,' which, perhaps, I had never written in Paris. The stones with which I erect this monument in honour of my country had, there, served but to crush me; a bold word had seemed a lawless licence, and the most innocent expressions had been interpreted with that charity that spreads poison through all." Again he writes: "I shall be historiographer of France in spite of my enemies, and I was never so

desirous of doing well the duties of my place as since I lost it. This vast picture of so illustrious an age turns my head. If Louis XIV. be not great, at least his age is. It is an immense work: I shall revise it severely, and shall endeavour, above all, to render the truth neither odious nor dangerous.

Besides this great undertaking, he corrected his tragedies. As usual, he infected all round with his love of the drama. A theatre was established at court; the brothers and sisters of the king took parts in his plays, and submitted to his instructions. This was a species of flattery well suited to turn a poet's head; yet soon, very soon, the dark cloud appeared in the horizon, and his attention became roused to assure himself whether indeed he heard the far off thunder of an approaching storm. These dawnings of fear and distrust are ingenuously detailed in his letters to his niece. "It is known, then, at Paris," he writes, "that we have acted the death of Cæsar at Potzdam; that prince Henri is a good actor, has no accent, and is very amiable; and that pleasures may be found here. All this is true — but — the suppers of the king are delicious — seasoned by reason, wit, and science — liberty reigns over them — he is the soul of all — no ill-humour, no clouds — at least, no storms; my life is independent and occupied; but — but — operas, plays, carousals, suppers at Sans-souci — warlike manœuvres, concerts, study, readings; but — but — the weather, my dear child, begins to be very cold ——" Nov. 6. 1750.

Such were the first expressions of distrust inspired by observing a certain degree of deceit in the king. He found that he could turn those into ridicule whom he flattered most to their face; and he also found that such blowing of hot and cold with the same breath, which is deemed almost fair in some societies, was fertile of annoyance when practised by a king whose word is law, whose smiles are the ruling influence of the day, whose slightest remark is reported, magnified, and becomes the rule of action to all around; and he

began to feel that the chain that bound him and the king, which he flattered would be worn equally by both, fell heavily round him only. He became aware that the king was not the less despotic and self-willed for being a philosopher. In truth, Frederic and Voltaire had a mutual and sincere love for each other. They agreed in their opinions, they sympathised in their views. Each enjoyed the conversation, the wit, the gaiety, the genius of the other; but Voltaire panted for entire independence: to think, to speak, to write freely, was as necessary as the air he breathed. To gain these privileges he had quitted France; and though he passionately loved flattery and distinction, yet these were only pleasing when they waited upon his every caprice; and became valueless when he was called upon to sacrifice the humour of the moment to gain them. The king delighted in Voltaire's talents; but, then, he wished them to be as much at his command as a soldier's valour, which deserves reward, but which may only be displayed at the word of command.

The moment a feeling of injustice on one side, and of assumption of direction on the other, showed themselves, a thousand circumstances arose to embitter the intercourse of the unequal friends. The king had a favourite guest, la Metrie, a physician by profession, the worst, Voltaire tells us, that ever practised, an unprincipled fellow, but witty and vivacious; whose good spirits, and bold and infidel opinions, pleased Frederic, who made him his reader. This sort of man is never suited to a court. The same restless aspiration after independence that renders a man an infidel in opinions makes him a bad courtier. "La Metrie," writes Voltaire to his niece, "boasts in his prefaces of his extreme felicity in being near a great king, who sometimes reads his poems to him; but, in secret, he weeps with me; he would leave this place on foot: and I—why am I here? You will be astonished at what I tell you. La Metrie swore to me the other day, that, when speaking to the king of my pretended

Sept. 2. 1751. Ætat. 57.

favour, and of the petty jealousy that it excites, he replied, 'I shall not want him for more than a year longer: one squeezes the orange, and throws away the peel.'"

These words sank deep in Voltaire's mind; and not less deeply did the king feel an expression of the irritable poet, who called himself Frederic's laundress, and said, when he corrected the royal poems, that he was washing the king's dirty linen. Such heedless speeches, carried from one to the other by the thoughtless or the malicious, destroyed every feeling of attachment, and circumstances soon concurred to inspire both with mistrust, to inspire the weaker with a desire of throwing off his chains, and the stronger with a more unworthy determination of adding to their weight.

The first circumstance of any importance that occurred was a pecuniary transaction between Voltaire and a Jew. Voltaire says, that after the speech of Frederic, reported to him by la Metrie, he wished to put his orange peel in safety. Whether his transaction with the Jew concerned the placing of his money cannot be told; it is enveloped in great obscurity; however, what is certain is, that it was submitted to a legal trial, the Jew condemned, and Voltaire entirely exonerated from blame. The mere fact, however, of an accusation being made against him, and fault found, was matter of triumph to his enemies. A thousand libels were circulated in Paris and Berlin, and a thousand falsehoods told. Frederic, when he heard of the dispute, referred it to the decision of the law. In this he did well. But he affected to distrust Voltaire; he forbade him to appear at court till the decision of the judges was known. Voltaire was far above peculation and pecuniary meanness. The king committed an irremissible crime in friendship, whether he really distrusted Voltaire, or merely pretended so to do. But a king of Prussia is an absolute monarch; all belonging to him are his creatures; and that one of these should venture out of bounds, either to secure his property or

to augment it, was regarded as a deep offence. Voltaire must be humbled. Treated like a servant, not a friend, what wonder that the sensitive poet felt that the orange was squeezed a little too hardly, and began to earnestly desire to save as much of it as he could. A sort of reconciliation, however, ensued; again all appeared smiling on the surface, though all was hollow beneath. Voltaire engaged in printing his "Age of Louis XIV.," was desirous of finishing it before he quitted Prussia; meanwhile he had a sum of money to the amount of 300,000 livres, about 15,000*l.*, which he wished to place; he took care not to put it in the Prussian funds, but secured it advantageously on certain estates which the duke of Wirtemburg possessed in France. Through the infidelity of the post Frederic discovered this transaction, and felt that it was a preparation for escape. Accordingly, he made more use of him than ever as a corrector of his literary works. In spite of all these disturbances, there was something in the life of Potzdam peculiarly agreeable to Voltaire. "I am lodged conveniently," he writes, "in a fine palace. I have a few friends about me of my own way of thinking, with whom I dine regularly and soberly. When I am well enough, I sup with the king; and conversation does not turn either upon individual gossip or general ineptities, but upon good taste, the arts, and true philosophy; on the means to attain happiness, on the mode of discerning the true from the false, upon liberty of thought: in short, during the two years I have spent at this place, which is called a court, but which is really a retreat for philosophers, not a day has passed during which I have not learnt something instructive." Thus Voltaire tried to blind himself, while he really enjoyed the conversation and friendship of Frederic, and while the cloven foot of despotism remained in shadow.

Among other modes of civilising Prussia and spreading the blessings of knowledge, Frederic had established an academy. This was a favourite creation, and

it did him honour. The president was Maupertuis, a man of some ability, but whose talents were vitiated by the taint of envy. He had considered himself the first *bel esprit* at court till Voltaire appeared. He and the poet had corresponded heretofore, and Voltaire had not spared flattery in his letters; but he neglected to mention Maupertuis's name in his speech when he took his seat in the French academy. This was not an injury to be forgiven; and though Voltaire paid him every sort of attention, the other could ill brook his superior favour, especially as Frederic, who had never relished his conversation, frequently excluded him from the royal suppers, and joined with Voltaire in making him the object of their endless pleasantries. At first Voltaire only jested, because he was a wit and could not help it; but Maupertuis contrived to rouse a more bitter spirit.

He had discovered a new principle in mechanics, that of the *least power:* this principle met much opposition, and Koenig, a Prussian mathematician, not only argued against it, but quoted a fragment of a letter of Leibnitz, in which this principle was mentioned and objected to. Koenig confessed that he possessed only a copy of the letter in question, acknowledging that the original was lost. Maupertuis took advantage of this circumstance; he induced the academy, of which he was president, to summon Koenig to produce the original; and when this was allowed not to be found, he proceeded to accuse him of forgery. He got up a meeting of such academicians as he could influence, by whom Koenig was declared unworthy to be any longer a member, and his name erased from the list.

Koenig had formerly instructed madame du Chatelet in the philosophy of Leibnitz. Voltaire consequently knew and esteemed him, and was indignant at the persecution he suffered; he took his part openly, and was only restrained from crushing his adversary by Frederic's personal request not to make a jest of his academy or its president. The seeds of animosity,

however, between him and Maupertuis, long sown, sprung up and flourished with vigour. Maupertuis contrived to excite a disreputable person of the name of La Beaumelle to attack the poet. His calumnies ought to have met with contempt only; but Voltaire was irritated, and his dislike to Maupertuis increased. The president published a book full of philosophical follies, which Voltaire satirised unsparingly. He wrote a diatribe called "Akakia," and read it to the king; Maupertuis was the butt of a thousand witticisms, and the royal suppers rang with laughter at his expense. But Voltaire was not content to make a jest of Maupertuis only in the royal presence, and Frederic, beginning to think that to attack his president was to attack his academy and also himself, published two pamphlets against Koenig, which also inculpated Voltaire. The poet was indignant. "I see," he writes to his niece, "that the orange is squeezed; I must now try to save the rind. I am going to write a small dictionary for the use of kings, in which it will be shown that *my friend*, means *my slave; my dear friend, you are becoming indifferent to me; I will make you happy, I will endure while I need you; sup with me this evening, you shall be my butt to-night.* Seriously, my heart is wounded. Speak to a man with tenderness, and write pamphlets against him — and what pamphlets! Tear a man from his country by the most solemn promises, and treat him with the blackest malignity. What a contrast!"

Voltaire was not a man to suffer these attacks without punishing them with a visitation of his unbridled wit. Fearful of attacking Frederic, he revenged himself on Maupertuis, and published "Akakia."

He belonged to the republic of letters, and did not understand that it should be ruled by the will of one man. And then, while he vehemently reprehended those authors who had made their literary enemies the objects of public satire, he, himself, indulged in the most bitter attacks. Frederic considered "Akakia" as a satire, deserved by Maupertuis, and thus a blameless

source of merriment at his supper table, where he had no objection to turn his president into ridicule; but the publication was quite another affair; by this he considered his academy, and consequently himself, attacked; and he retaliated by a still more flagrant outrage. He caused the diatribe to be burnt by the hands of the hangman in the public square of Berlin. Voltaire had a right to be deeply incensed by this act. He did not attack the honour or morality of Maupertuis in his diatribe, but simply ridiculed his opinions; and though "Akakia" has only that slight merit, dependent on associations of the day, now lost, which rendered it amusing to a circle, and was not adapted for general reading nor posterity, still, as it was not libellous, the act of the king of Prussia was an insolent exertion of intolerable despotism. He meant, perhaps, to break Voltaire's spirit by such an insult. Knowing that he could not return to Paris, he fancied him at his mercy. Voltaire had, however, but one wish — to escape, and to feel himself once more free. On this outrage he instantly returned "the king's baubles," as he called them, — the key of chamberlain, his cross, and the brevet of his pension, — with these verses: —

> "Je les reçus avec tendresse,
> Je les renvoie avec douleur,
> Comme un amant, dans sa jalouse ardeur,
> Rend le portrait de sa maitresse."

Thus trying to soften the acquisition of his freedom to Frederic himself. He at the same time said that he was ill, and asked permission to drink the waters of Plombières. The king, desirous of keeping him on his own terms, replied by sending some bark, and, observing that there were as medicinal waters in Silesia as at Plombières, refused permission for his journey.

Voltaire had but one other resource: he asked permission to see the king. They met, and the pleasure they took in each other's society seemed at once to obliterate the recollection of offence and wrong. It is said that Voltaire appeared before the king with "Akakia"

in his hand; on entering the room, he threw it into the fire, saying, "There, sire, is the only remaining copy of that unhappy book which caused me to lose your friendship." The king, in his German simplicity, fancied that the poet spoke the simple truth; he rushed to the fire to save the pamphlet from among the burning fagots. Voltaire struggled to poke it in. Frederic at length drew out the half-burnt pages in triumph. He embraced his friend. They supped together. "A supper of Damocles," Voltaire calls it; but to the king it was one of triumph, since it appeared to be the sign that he had bent Voltaire's spirit to pass over the indignities heaped on him, and secured him as a submissive courtier for ever. As a token of his renewed servitude, he gave him back "the baubles." Maupertuis, himself, was not spared by the friends, who, as far as wit could go, sacrificed him at the shrine of their reconciliation. Voltaire, however, had but one end in view. He used his regained influence to obtain permission for a journey to Plombières, promising to be absent only a few months — a promise he did not mean to keep. But as Francis I. broke the treaty which Charles V. forced him to make in prison in Madrid, so might Voltaire consider any promise he made to Frederic void, while the frontiers of Prussia were guarded by an hundred and fifty thousand men, and independence had become necessary to his existence.

Voltaire exulted in escaping from the palace of Alcina — as he named the abode of Frederic; but he did not think it prudent to venture to Paris, where his enemies were in vigour, and strengthened by the displeasure with which Louis XV. regarded the poet's having exchanged his court for that of Frederic. Instead, therefore, of taking refuge in his own country (if the subject of an arbitrary monarch can be said to have a country), he remained some time at Leipsic. Here he received a ridiculous challenge from Maupertuis, which only tended to add zest to his pleasantries upon him; and he then proceeded to the court of the duchess of

Saxe Gotha, a most excellent and enlightened princess, "who, thank God," says Voltaire, "did not write verses." He breathed again without fear, believing that he had secured his freedom. He continued his journey to Frankfort, where he was met by madame Denis. The bad state of Voltaire's health rendered a woman's presence and attentions necessary; and he was proud also of the heroic sacrifice it seemed in those days when a lady, enjoying the pleasures of Parisian society, quitted them to attend on a sick old uncle, even though that uncle were Voltaire. Here a sort of tragi-comic adventure ensued, to the temporary annoyance of the poet, and the lasting disgrace of the king of Prussia.

Frederic's angry feelings were roused by several just causes of annoyance. He learned that "Akakia" was published in Holland, and he remembered the scene of its pretended destruction by its author with indignation. He was angry, also, that the poet had escaped, and was no longer liable to the effects of his displeasure, and fear of ridicule added poignancy to these feelings. Frederic at once wished to punish his former friend, and to shield himself from the shafts of his ridicule. Voltaire had taken with him a volume of Frederic's poems, privately circulated and given to him. The king feared that his corrector might strip his verses of their borrowed feathers, and deliver up the unfledged nurslings to the laughter of the world. He sent orders to his agent at Francfort to demand back this volume, as well as the baubles before returned and restored. His agent was a Jew of low character, and totally illiterate. He proceeded against Voltaire, as if he had been a servant suspected of running away with his master's plate. The precious volume which Freitag called *L'Œuvre de Poeshie du Roi son Maître*, had been left at Leipsic. Voltaire and madame Denis were kept under strict arrest till this unfortunate book arrived at Francfort; and as there are always ill-omened birds who scent ill fortune, and take advantage

of it; so, now, a bookseller of the Hague, whom Voltaire had employed, many years ago, to print the "Anti-Machiavel" of Frederic, brought forward a balance of twenty crowns with interest and compound interest, which the poet was forced to pay. At last, after a disagreeable and strict imprisonment of nearly a month's duration, Voltaire and his niece were allowed to depart.

Thus ended the treaty of equal friendship between king and poet. The pettiness of the details is striking. We find neither the magnanimity of a hero in one, nor the calmness of a philosopher in the other. Voltaire had the excuse that he avenged his injured friend Koenig in his satire on Maupertuis. He had dreamed of independence in a palace; and from the moment he discovered his mistake he was eager to be free. Frederic, meanwhile, was taught by his enemies to regard him as a restless, intriguing Frenchman. He had written to him, at the beginning of their quarrel: "I was glad to receive you. I esteemed your understanding, your talents, your acquirements; and I believed that a man of your age, weary of skirmishing with authors and exposing himself to the storm, would take refuge here as in a tranquil port. First, you exacted from me, in a singular manner, that I should not engage Freron to correspond with me, and I had the weakness to yield. You visited the Russian minister, and talked to him of affairs in which you had no right to interfere; and it was believed that I commissioned you. You had a dirty transaction with a Jew, and filled the city with clamour. I preserved peace in my house till you arrived; and I warn you, that if you have a passion for intrigue and cabal, you have addressed yourself very ill. I like quiet people; and if you can resolve to live like a philosopher, I shall be glad to see you; but if you give way to your passions, and quarrel with everybody, you had better remain at Berlin. * * * * I write this letter with unpolished German good sense, which says what it thinks, and without adopting equivocal terms and

soft palliations to disfigure the truth."* This letter shows that Frederic believed himself to be in the right, and had conceived a bad opinion of his friend. We all know the height to which misunderstandings can rise when fostered by malicious and interested persons. We cannot wonder that men of quick tempers like Frederic and Voltaire should disagree; but it was to be lamented that they made their pettish quarrels a spectacle for all Europe.

Voltaire had now a new life to fix upon. He was eager to secure his entire independence. The tranquillity he had at first enjoyed in Prussia made him feel the value of peace. This he could never find in his own country, and he henceforth looked upon expatriation as the only means of securing his tranquillity. Chance assisted him in forming the choice of an abode, which, from the independence it afforded, placed him in a high and dignified position in the eyes of all Europe. He had at first entertained the plan of establishing himself in Alsatia, in which province he spent two years, after leaving Prussia, occupied in writing the annals of the empire; but he was disturbed by the attacks of the Jesuits, who were angry because they had failed in an endeavour to convert him. He found that he could not visit Paris with safety; and he hesitated where to establish himself. Meanwhile, his health being, as ever, bad, he was advised to try the waters of Aix, in Savoy.

In his way thither he passed through Lyons. Cardinal Tencin refused to receive him, on account of his

* When the correspondence was renewed between Frederic and Voltaire, they could not help alluding to the past, and their expressions show that each thought himself in the right. Voltaire says, "I am unutterably surprised when you write that I have spoken harshly to you. For twenty years you were my idol, '*je l'ai dit à la terre, au ciel, à Guzman même;* but your trade of hero, and your situation of king, do not render the disposition tender: it is a pity, for your heart was made for kindness; and were it not for heroism and a throne, you would have been the most amiable man in the world." Frederic replied, with greater force, "I well know that I adored you as long as I thought you neither mischievous nor malicious: but you have played me so many tricks, of all kinds. Let us say no more; I have pardoned you. After all, you have done me more good than ill. I am more amused by your works, than hurt by your scratches."

being out of favour at court. Voltaire was piqued; but the inhabitants of Lyons compensated for the insult. They entertained him with public honours; got up his tragedies, that he might be present at the representation, and receive the enthusiastic applause of an audience who gloried in the opportunity of thus rewarding the author of works which excited so much admiration. Proceeding from Lyons to Savoy, he passed through Geneva, and here he consulted Tronchin, a physician, whom every one looked on as holding life and death in his hands. Tronchin dissuaded him from trying the waters, but promised to restore his health if he would make some stay near him. Voltaire gave readier faith than could have been expected from a ridiculer of the medical art. He consented to remain in the neighbourhood of Geneva; and, finding that it was an established law that no Catholic might purchase land in Protestant Switzerland, it pleased his whimsical mind instantly to buy an estate in the territory of Geneva. Add to which motive, he fully appreciated the advantages he must derive from living out of France, yet in a country where French was spoken, and where liberty of speech and of the press had hitherto reigned undisturbed. His house, named Les Delices, was beautifully situated. He describes it as commanding a delightful view. The lake on one side, the town of Geneva on the other; the swift swelling Rhone formed a stream at the end of his garden, fed by the Arve and other mountain rivers. A hundred country houses with their gardens adorned the shores of the lake and of the rivers; and the Alps were seen afar off, — Mont Blanc and its range, whose picturesque snow-clad peaks for ever presented new aspects, as the clouds or the varying sunlight painted them. A philosopher, blest with affluence, might well be happy in such a seclusion. Soon after his arrival, Voltaire wrote the fragment of his autobiography, to explain his quarrel with the king of Prussia. These memoirs are one of his most entertaining works. The

1755. Ætat. 61.

playful sarcasm, which characterises every page he ever wrote, in this production reaches home, yet can scarcely be said to sting. He laughs at Frederic and his *Œuvres des Poeshies;* he laughs at his own illusions; and then lingers with fondness on the retreat he had at last found from the tumult of society and the friendship or enmity of kings. He congratulates himself on having made his own fortune, and confesses that this was done by speculations in finance. "It is necessary to be attentive to the operations to which the ministry, always pressed and always changing, makes in the finances of the state," he observes. "Something often occurs of which a private individual can profit without being under obligations to any one; and it is vastly agreeable to fabricate one's own fortune. The first step is troublesome, the rest are easy. One must be economical in one's youth, and in old age one is surprised at one's wealth. Money is at that time more necessary, and that time I now enjoy. After having lived with kings, I am become a king in my home. I possess all the conveniences of life in furniture, equipages, and good living. The society of agreeable and clever people occupy all the time spared from study and the care I am forced to take of my health. While I enjoy the most pleasant style of life that can be imagined, I have the little philosophic pleasure of perceiving that the kings of Europe do not taste the same happy tranquillity; and I conclude that the position of a private person is often preferable to that of royalty."

These words were singularly verified in the renewal of his correspondence with the king of Prussia. Frederic had begun it by sending him an opera he had founded on "Merope." Soon after the coalition was formed against Prussia, which, victorious at first, brought Frederic to the position of rebel against the empire. The loss of a battle reduced him to extremities; and, rather than submit to his enemies, he resolved to commit suicide. He wrote a long epistle in verse announcing his intention: Voltaire answered it in

1756. Ætat. 62.

prose, and combated his idea by every argument that seemed most likely to have weight. Frederic was in some sort convinced; he dismissed the idea of self-destruction; but he resolved to fall on the field of battle, unless the victory was decided in his favour.

This more heroic resolution was rewarded by the gain of two battles, in which scarcely a Prussian fell, and the defeat of the enemy was complete. Frederic wrote triumphantly to his friend to announce his victories. Soon after, Voltaire was applied to by cardinal Tencin, who had refused to receive him at Lyons, to forward letters which were to negotiate a peace. The wily philosopher consented: he was aware that the cardinal would fail, and he was malicious enough to wish to enjoy the sight of his mortification. The cardinal did fail, and more disgracefully than he expected; and the disappointment cost him his life. "I have never been able to understand," Voltaire observes, "how it is that people are killed by vexation, and how ministers and cardinals, whose hearts are so hard, retain sufficient sensibility to die from the effects of a disappointment. It was my design to mortify and laugh at, not to kill him."

1758. Ætat. 64.

Voltaire had secured his safety, and could give himself up to that ardent love of study, that restless aspiration for fame, that eager endeavour to overthrow the superstitions (and, unfortunately, more than the superstitions, the religion) of Europe, and that more noble resolution to oppose all abuses, and to be the refuge and support of the oppressed, which animated his soul through a long life chequered by physical suffering. In his retreat of Les Delices, he brought out his historical work on the "Manners and Spirit of Nations." He composed several of his best tragedies; he wrote "Candide," a book rendered illustrious by its wit and penetrating spirit of observation, in spite of its grossness and implied impiety, which are the reigning blemishes of Voltaire's writings. As usual, also, he erected a theatre in his house. Added to his

habitual love for theatrical amusements, he hoped to impart a taste for them to the Genevese, and so to weaken that ascetic spirit of repulsion of intellectual pleasure to which, whether enjoined by monks or recommended by Calvin, he was hostile.

All, however, was not labour, peace, and amusement. The publication of the poem of the "Pucelle" threatened a renewal of the persecutions of which he had been the victim in his earlier days. Several forged verses in ridicule of Louis XV. and madame de Pompadour had been foisted into the surreptitious edition that appeared, and it was with difficulty that his friends proved that he was not the writer. Voltaire, indeed, was always in a state of inky war. A man who had provoked the priesthood of Europe, and whose talent for perceiving and pourtraying the ridiculous was unequalled and unsparing, could not fail in creating a host of enemies. Satires, epigrams, and libels rained on him. In his retirement of Les Delices, he might, if he had chosen, have been insensible to these attacks; but not one but found their way; he answered all, dealing about his shafts dipped in sarcasm and irony, and spreading abroad a sort of terror that served as a wholesome check to his enemies. A word or line from his pen marked a man for ever. Several among those thus attacked were forced to hide themselves till a new victim was immolated, and their own disgrace forgotten. In his "Life of Molière," speaking of the epigrams with which Boileau and Molière attacked, and, it is said, caused the death of, Cotin, Voltaire called this the sad effect of a licence rather perilous than useful, which is more apt to flatter the malignity of men than to inspire good taste; and in his "Essay on Satire," he severely blames Boileau for naming the poets whom he censures. Yet, with blind inconsistency, Voltaire never spared an enemy. He conceived that, if attacked by, he had a fair right to annihilate, as he well could, the stinging gadflies of literature. The society of Paris was kept alive by his multitudinous epigrams. This engendered a baneful spirit of sarcasm,

and spread abroad an appetite for injuring others by ridicule, slander, and jests that wound. They rendered society more heartless and more cruel than ever.

Voltaire, himself, was visited by the effects of the disturbed state of feeling he helped to engender. He had hoped to find a safe asylum in the Genevese territories. But his attacks on their prejudices created a host of enemies. He began to feel that the dark shadows of persecution were gathering round. He found that, although his presence in Paris would not be permitted, he might, in safety, take up his abode in a remote part of France. He purchased, therefore, the estate of Ferney, on the French territory, within a short distance of Geneva; and thus with a foot, as it were, in two separate states, he hoped to find safety in one if threatened with hostility in the other.

1762. Ætat. 68.

He was more fortunate than he anticipated. The persecutions he afterwards endured were reduced to little more than threats, and were less than might be expected by a man who first raised the voice of hostility to, and resolved on, the destruction of a system of religion supported by a powerful hierarchy which was in possession of half the wealth of the nations who professed their faith, and which was regarded as the bulwark of their power by the monarchs of Europe. Voltaire's poem on the law of Nature, and his version of Ecclesiastes, were burnt in Paris as deistical and blasphemous, although the latter had no fault but that of turning the sublime into commonplace. A poem on the earthquake at Lisbon was also produced at this time; and "Candide" was written and published. To collect together the most dreadful misfortunes, to heap them on the head of a single individual, and in one canvass to group all of disastrous that a fertile imagination can paint, and present this as a picture of life, does not seem at first sight the most worthy occupation of a philosopher. Voltaire himself, though he had met reverses, was a living refutation of "Candide." But as, in truth, whether by sudden reverse or the

slow undermining of years, all human hope does fade and decay, as life proceeds to its close; so Voltaire, now nearly seventy years of age, might, on looking back, consider disappointment and sorrow as the mark of humanity; and, by showing these ills to be inevitable, inculcate a philosophical indifference. Still the tone of "Candide" is not moral, and, like all Voltaire's lighter productions, is stamped with a coarseness which renders it unfit for general perusal. In addition to these minor productions, Voltaire laboured at the correction and enlargement of his historical work on the "Manners and Spirit of Nations," — one of the greatest monuments which his genius achieved.

While Voltaire was at Berlin, d'Alembert and Diderot had set on foot the project of the "Encyclopédie." Their plan was, to write a book which would become indispensable to every library, from its containing the most recent discoveries in philosophy, and the best explanations and details on every topic, and this mingled with an anti-catholic spirit, that would serve to sap the foundations of the national religion. Voltaire contributed but few, and those merely literary, articles to this work — whose progress, however, he regarded with lively interest.

The outcry against the "Encyclopédie" was of course prodigious; every one who did not belong to the party formed by the lovers of innovation rose against it. Parliament and clergy pronounced its condemnation, and succeeded so far in suppressing it, that the editors were obliged to continue it clandestinely. They, however, did not submit without a struggle: a literary war was declared, which raged furiously. Voltaire was considered at the head of the liberal party, and he gave his mighty aid to turn the opposers of his opinions into ridicule. One after the other, they sank under the shafts of his wit, and were forced to take shelter in retirement from the ridicule with which his epigrams had covered them. Voltaire considered his thus abetting his friends a sacred duty. "I belong to a party," he wrote, "and

a persecuted party, which, persecuted as it is, has nevertheless gained the greatest possible advantage over its enemies, by rendering them at once odious and ludicrous."

It is pleasant to turn from these matters, which often display the self-love and intolerance of the philosophers of the day, to such acts as stamp Voltaire as a generous man, full of the warmest feelings of benevolence, and capable of exerting all his admirable faculties in the noblest cause, — that of assisting and saving the unfortunate. A great niece of Corneille lived in indigence in Paris. A friend of hers conceived the happy thought of applying to Voltaire for assistance; and that which he instantly afforded, at once rescued her from privation and care. His answer to the application deserves record. "It becomes an old follower of the great Corneille to endeavour to be useful to the descendant of his general. When one builds chateaux and churches, and has poor relations to support, one has but little left to assist one, who ought to be aided by the first people in the kingdom. I am old. I have a niece who loves the fine arts, and cultivates them with success. If the young lady of whom you speak will accept a good education under my niece's care, she will look on her as a daughter, and I will be to her as a father." This offer was of course gratefully accepted. The young lady was clever, lively, yet gentle. Voltaire himself assisted in her education. "I do not wish to make her learned," he writes, "but desire that she should learn how to conduct the affairs of life and to be happy." He was rewarded for his exertion by his protégée's docility and gratitude. As a means of obtaining a dowry for her, he wrote his elaborate commentary on Corneille's works, and published it, with an edition of the great tragedian's works, by subscription — inducing the monarchs and nobles of Europe, through his mighty influence, to send in their names, and thus fabricated a fortune for the orphan.

Soon after, another and more important occasion

offered itself for serving his fellow creatures, and he acquitted himself of the task with resolution and success.

The frightful spirit of persecution of the Huguenots, engendered by the revocation of the edict of Nantes, by Louis XIV. and his dragoon-missionaries, still survived in the provinces; and not only embittered the minds of the ignorant, but influenced the legal authorities, and led them always to associate the ideas of crime and Protestantism together. Jean Calas had been a merchant of Thoulouse for forty years. He was a Protestant — an upright and good man, and by no means bigoted. One of his sons was a convert to Catholicism; but, far from showing displeasure, Calas made him an allowance for his maintenance. A female servant who had been in his family for thirty years was a Catholic. One of his sons, named Marc-Antoine, committed suicide. He was a young man of a restless, sombre, discontented disposition; he disliked trade, and found himself excluded by the laws against his religion from entering on any profession. He read various books on suicide — conversed on the subject with his friends — and one day, having lost all his money in play, resolved on the fatal act. The family supped together; they had a guest with them — a young man only nineteen, named Lavaisse, known for his amiable and gentle disposition. After supper, Marc-Antoine left them; and when, shortly after, Lavaisse took his leave, and the father went down stairs to let him out, they discovered his son hanging from a door: he had undressed himself, folded up his clothes, and committed the act with the utmost deliberation. The family were seized with terror. They summoned medical aid and officers of justice; their cries and terror gathered a crowd about the house. The only error they committed was, that, knowing the horror in which suicide was held, they at first declared that the unfortunate man had died a natural death. The falsehood of this assertion being at once detected, the most frightful suspicions were the consequence.

The people of Thoulouse were peculiarly fanatical — they regarded Protestants as monsters capable of any crime: a whisper was raised that Jean Calas had murdered his son. A story was quickly fabricated and believed. It was alleged that Marc-Antoine was on the point of abjuring Protestantism, and that his family and Lavaisse had murdered him, to prevent him from putting his design into execution. A thousand other details were swiftly invented for the purpose of adding terror to the scene. The chief magistrate of Thoulouse, named David, excited by these rumours, and paying no attention to possibility or proof, without even proceeding with legal forms, threw the whole family of Calas, their Catholic servant, and Lavaisse into prison. In the frenzy of the moment, they turned the supposed victim into a martyr, and buried him in the church of St. Etienne, as if he had already abjured his faith, and died in consequence. One of the religious confraternities of the town celebrated his funeral with pomp; a magnificent catafalque was raised to his honour, on which was placed a skeleton, who was supposed to represent Marc-Antoine, which was made to move; it held a pen, with which it was supposed to sign the act of abjuration. The people, excited by their priests, were transported with fanaticism: they invoked the son as a saint; they demanded the execution of the father as a murderer.

The details of the trial of the unfortunate man accused of murdering his own son were not less frightful and unjust: of twelve judges, six acquitted him — it required a plurality of voices for his condemnation. Two judges were terrified into retiring; others were gained over; a majority of two was obtained, and the unfortunate Calas broken on the wheel.

The whole circumstances were full of contradiction and absurdity. Calas was sixty-eight years of age,— a kind father and a good man. If he had committed the murder, the whole of his family must have been equally guilty, as it was proved that they spent the even-

ing together, and that he had never quitted them for a moment. The judges paused, however, before they condemned mother, brothers, sisters, the youth, their guest, and their Catholic servant; they deferred their trial till after the death of the old man, under the pretence that he might confess under execution. Calas died in torture, however, protesting his innocence; and the judges were perplexed what to do next. At first they pronounced a sentence of acquittal; but, feeling that this decision was in too glaring contradiction with that which condemned the father to the wheel, they practised on the weakness of Pierre Calas to induce him to become a Catholic: fear led him to show signs of yielding, at first; but the weakness was temporary, and he fled from the monastery in which he had been induced to take refuge. The unfortunate widow, Lavaisse, and the servant were liberated. Deprived of fortune, covered with infamy, reduced to destitution, the wretched family took refuge in Geneva. Their case was mentioned to Voltaire; he sent for the surviving victims to Ferney; he questioned them rigorously; the mere fact that the parliament of Thoulouse had condemned the father, and liberated those who, had a murder been committed, must have been accomplices, sufficed to show that the sentence was unjust, and the execution of the unfortunate old man a legal assassination. He obtained the documents of the proceeding from Thoulouse; he found the narration of the Calas faithful in all its parts, while their appearance and words bore the stamp of undeniable truth. He was struck with horror, and exerted that energy which formed his prominent characteristic to obtain justice for them, — an undertaking which must strike any one familiar with narratives of judicial proceedings in France, at that time, as full of nearly insuperable obstacles. He interested the duke de Choiseul, a man of known humanity, in their favour. The duchess d'Enville was then at Geneva, having come to consult the famous Tronchin. She was an amiable and generous woman, and superior to the prejudices

and superstition of the age. She became the protectress of the Calas. The family were sent to Paris; the widow demanded a trial, and surrendered herself to prison. Voltaire was indefatigable in drawing up memoirs and papers in their justification. He did what no other man could have done: he roused all Europe to take interest in their cause, and kept alive the memory of their wrongs by writings that at once pourtrayed their sufferings and argued in favour of toleration, — a word which then appeared synonymous with blasphemy, and even to this day is not imprinted with sufficient depth in the minds of men. The legal proceedings were carried on at his expense. These extended to a great length. Two years passed before a definitive judgment was pronounced; "so easy is it," remarks Voltaire, "for fanaticism to condemn and destroy the innocent, so difficult for reason to exculpate them." The duke de Choiseul had named a tribunal which was not implicated with the tortuous and intolerant policy of the French parliaments, to try the cause. But endless formalities succeeded one to the other. The spirit which Voltaire had raised in their favour was fervent in Paris. Persons of the first distinction visited the accused in prison, and every one vied with the other in administering consolation and support. In England a large subscription was raised in their favour. At length the day of their acquittal arrived. The judges unanimously pronounced that the whole family was innocent, and the memory of the unfortunate father was redeemed from infamy. All Paris was alive with joy and triumph: the people assembled in various parts of the town; they were eager to see the persons to whom justice was at last done; they clapped their hands in triumph when they appeared; the judges addressed the king to supplicate him to repair the pecuniary losses of the family, and the sum of 36,000 livres was given for this purpose. Voltaire, in his seclusion among the Alps, heard of the success, and of the enthusiastic joy with which his countrymen hailed the triumph of in-

nocence; he had a right to look on himself as the cause, not only of the justice at last done to the wronged, but of the virtuous sympathy felt by all Europe in their acquittal. He, whose sensations were all so keen, felt deeply the gladness of victory. He knew that many blessed his name; he felt himself to be the cause of good to his fellow-creatures, and the epithet of the saviour of the Calas was that in which, to the end of his life, he took most pride and joy. His letters at the moment of the final decision show the depth of his emotion. "Philosophy, alone, has gained this victory," he writes; "my old eyes weep with joy." To conclude the history, David, the magistrate whose fanaticism and cruelty hurried on the death of the miserable old man, was deprived of his place; struck by remorse and shame, he lost his reason, and soon after died. 1765. Ætat. 71.

Voltaire, known as the protector of the innocent, was soon called upon to render a similar service for another family. A girl of the name of Sirven had been carried off from her Protestant family, and, according to the barbarous custom of the times, was shut up in a convent; where, not yielding to conversion as readily as was expected, she was treated with such severity that in a fit of desperation she threw herself into a well and was drowned. Instead of punishing the priests and nuns for the effects of their persecution, her family was accused of her death. They had time to escape, but were condemned to death for contumacy. The unfortunate father and mother resolved to apply to Voltaire. Reduced to destitution, they were forced to make the journey on foot, and presented themselves in a miserable state at Ferney. Voltaire was eager to raise his voice in their favour, though he was aware that the public, having lavished all their pity on the Calas would listen coldly to a new story. The spirit of toleration, which, nevertheless, he had spread abroad, served him in this case, as the enthusiasm of compassion had in the other; such delays, however, occurred, that the unfortunate mother

died while the cause was yet pending. He could not obtain that the case should be tried in Paris. The accused were obliged to surrender to the parliament of Thoulouse. The principal people of that town had become eager to exonerate themselves from the charges of persecution and injustice which their former conduct had raised. The trial was carried on impartially, and Sirven was acquitted. Seven years, however, had elapsed before this tardy act of justice was completed.

Another instance of religious intolerance, more frightful in some of its details than the preceding, roused Voltaire to combat the sanguinary clergy of his country with renewed zeal. But in this instance he could not save the victims already immolated by the malignancy of private enmity, and the cruel bigotry of public tribunals.

Some very young men resident at Abbeville had rendered themselves notorious for the freedom of their religious opinions. They read and praised with enthusiasm various infidel books then in vogue. They had been known to sing blasphemous songs at their supper table; and once, on returning home late at night after a drunken frolic, one struck with his cane a wooden crucifix placed by the road side. These acts, committed, as they were, by boys under twenty, deserved blame, and even it might be deemed punishment, but punishment suited to their few years and consequent thoughtlessness; but it was a frightful exaggeration to consider them criminals in the eye of the law, especially as none existed in France against misdemeanours of this nature, and they could only be punished by an act of arbitrary power. This was exerted to punish them with a barbarity which is supposed to characterise the Spanish inquisition alone; though if we read the history of the Gallican church, we find that the priests of its powerful hierarchy were behind those of no nation in the spirit of sanguinary and merciless persecution. Unfortunately, in the present instance, one of the principal actors in this foolish scene, a boy of seventeen, had a personal enemy. A rich and avaricious old man of Abbeville,

named Belleval, had an intrigue with madame de Brou, abbess of Villancour. This lady's nephew, the chevalier de la Barre, came to pay her a visit; he and his friends were in the habit of supping in the convent, and he was considered the successful rival of Belleval. This man resolved to be revenged. He spread abroad in Abbeville the history of their blasphemous conversations; he excited the spirit of fanaticism against them among the populace, and raised such clamour in the city that the bishop of Amiens thought it necessary to visit it for the purpose of taking informations with regard to the circumstances reported to him. Belleval busied himself in collecting witnesses, and in exaggerating every instance of folly committed by these youths. Unfortunately, not only the populace and priests of the city, but the tribunals by whom the cause was tried, seconded too frightfully his iniquitous designs; although the very fact of the misconduct of the abbess, by bringing the Catholic religion into disrespect among these boys, ought to have pleaded in their favour. The young men were condemned to a cruel death. Amongst them was numbered Belleval's own son; this was unexpected by the informer; and, in despair, he contrived that he should escape, together with two of his young associates. The remainder were not so fortunate. La Barre, a youth, scarcely seventeen, condemned to undergo the torture and to have his tongue cut out, and then to be decapitated, underwent his sentence. When too late, the people of France awoke to a just sense of horror at the cruelty committed. Voltaire was transported by indignation. "You have heard," he wrote to d'Alembert, "the account from Abbeville. I do not understand how thinking beings can remain in a country where monkeys so often turn to tigers. I am ashamed to live even on the frontier. This, indeed, is the moment to break all ties and carry elsewhere the horror with which I am filled. What! at Abbeville, monsters in the guise of judges, sentence a child of sixteen to perish by the most frightful death — their

judgment is confirmed — and the nation bears it! Is this the country of philosophy and luxury? It is that of St. Bartholomew. The inquisition had not dared to put in execution what these Jansenist judges have perpetrated."

Voltaire's horror could not save the victim, for the evil was committed before the news of the trial reached him. The populace, it is true, even before the execution of the victims, returned to their senses, and Belleval was held in such execration that he was forced to fly from Abbeville, to avoid being torn to pieces. But the king and parliament of Paris refused to repair their fault towards the survivors. Voltaire did what he could. He recommended one of the victims who had fled, the chevalier d'Etallonde, to the king of Prussia, whose service he entered; and he endeavoured to open the eyes of government to the justice and propriety of repairing its crime. But the duke de Choiseul feared to act, and the parliament of Paris was a bigoted and intolerant body.

To his honour, we find that he was unwearied in his endeavours. When Louis XVI. succeeded to the crown, and a milder reign commenced, he renewed his exertions. D'Etallonde had, from good conduct, been promoted in the Prussian army. He invited him to Ferney, and endeavoured to interest the ministers of Louis in his favour, and to prevail on them to revoke his sentence: in vain; the government had not sufficient justice to avoid a fault, nor humanity to desire to repair it.

Such were the crimes committed in the outraged name of religion, that animated Voltaire with the desire of wresting the power of doing ill from the hands of the priesthood of his country, and which made him the unwearied and active enemy of a system which sanctioned such atrocities. In the present instance, something of fear added a sting to his feelings. The "Philosophical Dictionary," a work he denied having written, but of which, in reality, he was the author, was mentioned among the books, a respect for which

formed one of La Barre's crimes, and it was burned in Paris, while exertions were made to denounce and punish him as the author. These failed; but they embittered Voltaire's enmity. He spread abroad the history of the enormities, which the perpetrators, ashamed too late, were desirous of hushing up. Lalli, a barrister, who was accused of having a principal part in the nefarious proceeding, wrote to Voltaire at once to excuse himself, and threaten the author. Voltaire replied, by an anecdote in Chinese history. "I forbid you," said the emperor of China, to the chief of the historical tribunal, "to mention me." The mandarin took out his note book and pen — "What are you doing?" said the emperor. "I am writing down the order which your majesty has just pronounced."

As some sort of compensation for these acts of horror and cruelty, Voltaire heard of the banishment of the Jesuits from France. This community had long reigned paramount in that kingdom; one of the society was, by custom, always selected as confessor of the king. It had signalised itself by every possible act of intolerance and persecution. The Jansenists, the Huguenots, and the Quietists were exiled, imprisoned, and ruined, through their influence. France was depopulated. In bitterness of spirit, the truly pious and wise of the kingdom, Boileau, Racine, Pascal, Fénélon, Arnaud, and a long list more, knew that their zeal for a pure religion exposed them to persecution. Voltaire disliked the Jansenists, and ridiculed the Quietists; but he was too just not to revolt from persecution; and though, from the prejudices of early education, he was inclined to look favourably on the Jesuits, he rejoiced in their fall from the power which they misused, and their expulsion from a country, so many of whose most virtuous inhabitants they had visited with exile and ruin.

In writing Voltaire's life, we have too often to turn from acts denoting a benevolent and generous spirit, to others which were inspired by self-love, and a restless spirit that could not repose. Among these, his

conduct to Rousseau has disgraceful prominence. It is true that the citizen of Geneva had provoked him first; but Rousseau was the victim of the system of tyranny which Voltaire so fervently deprecated. Even if his intellects were not impaired, he had, from the unfortunate susceptibility of his disposition, and the misfortunes that pursued him, become an object of commisseration, at least to one who sympathised in his opinions and views. But once attacked, Voltaire never forgave. He could not be injured, yet he avenged the intended injury. Had he confined his ridicule and blame of Rousseau to conversation and letters, it had, considering his influence in society, been sufficient revenge; but when, to a great degree excited by Rousseau, those troubles and tumults occurred in Geneva, from which Voltaire was so far the sufferer, that he thought himself obliged to sell his property of Les Delices, he made the tumults the subject of a licentious and burlesque poem, in which Rousseau was held up to ridicule. The disgrace, however, recoiled on himself. His most enthusiastic friends blamed his conduct, and disliked his poem.

Voltaire ran a more fortunate career than befalls most men. He was rich, and he had been wise enough to adopt a system that insured his independence. At a distance from the capital, he was in reality removed from the cabals of literature, the turmoils of society, and from the excitement, so often attended by disappointment, that belongs to the life of a literary man of high reputation. He led what he himself terms a patriarchal life; his niece was at the head of his household. The niece of Corneille, adopted by him, had married M. Dupuis, a gentleman of some fortune in the neighbourhood of Geneva, and resided in his house. No foreigner ever passed from France to Italy without paying a visit to Ferney. All those of any note or merit were received with cordial hospitality, and the chateau was never free from guests: above fifty persons of different grades—masters, guests, and servants—in-

habited it. In the midst of this turmoil, Voltaire led a laborious life. His health was feeble. During the winters, which the neighbourhood of the eternal snows render peculiarly severe, he was nearly always confined to his bed. But physical suffering never tamed his spirit. From the bed of sickness, he sent abroad various writings, some in support of the best interests of humanity (as in the cases of Calas, &c.), others historical and poetic, and not a few replete with that malicious pleasantry that caused him to be universally feared.

Few things occurred to interrupt the tenour of his life. At one time, his niece, madame Denis, and his protégés, monsieur and madame Dupuis, left him to visit Paris, and he was left for nearly two years alone in his retreat. A thousand reports were current as to the cause of this separation; but, in time, it became acknowledged that Voltaire's own account of it was true. "I have been," he wrote to madame du Deffand, "the innkeeper of Europe for fourteen years, and I am tired of the trade. I have received three or four hundred English, who are so fond of their country, that not one has recollected me since their departure, except a Scotchman, of the name of Brown, who has written against me. I have had French colonels, with their officers, who have remained a month, but who serve their king so well, that they have never written to me. I have built a chateau and a church. I have spent five hundred thousand francs in these pious and profane works; and my illustrious debtors in Paris and Germany, conceiving that these acts of magnificence did not become me, have thought proper to curtail my means to teach me wisdom. I found myself suddenly almost reduced to philosophy. I have sent madame Denis to urge the generous French; I have taken the generous Germans on myself. My seventy-four years and continual illnesses condemn me to seclusion and moderation. This life cannot suit madame Denis, who acted against the grain in coming to live with me in the country. She needs perpetual company and plea-

1766. Ætat. 72.

sures to make her endure this desert, which, according to the Russians themselves, is for five months of the year worse than Siberia. Madame Denis had need of Paris; the niece of Corneille had greater need, as she only saw it at an age and in a situation which did not permit her to become acquainted with it. I made an effort to separate myself from them, that they might enjoy the pleasures of the capital."

After a visit to Paris of nearly two years, they returned to him again.

A visit to Ferney was an event in a traveller's life. In personal intercourse, Voltaire was, according to the testimony of the king of Prussia, and of every other contemporary, and singularly delightful and entertaining. "You are agreeable in conversation, and instruct and amuse at the same time. You are the most fascinating creature in the world; and, when you choose, no one could resist loving you: your wit and genius are so graceful, that, even while you offend, every one is ready to forgive you." This is the description that Frederic gives of him. Nor did age diminish the lustre of his wit, the vivacity of his spirit, or the alternate gaiety and impressive charm of his conversation. It was only at a distance that his tendency to what the French call *tracasserie*—an inherent love of disturbance—and the vehement, uncourteous, and unfair manner with which he carried on a dispute, made his contemporaries, while they viewed him with wonder and delight, yet alternately fear and censure him. He appeared particularly amiable to those who sought his protection, for he was ever generous in pecuniary points, and lavish of his praises to literary men, as long as they paid worship at his shrine. His intercourse with Marmontel illustrates this subject, and we shall extract his account of his visit to Ferney, as giving a vivid picture of the vivacity, and whimsical and capricious disposition, of this singular man; who in age and suffering was as energetic, active, and enthusiastic as a youth just entering warm and undeceived on the scene of life.

Marmontel had several years before been excited by him to venture on a literary career in Paris. On his arrival, Voltaire received him with a cordiality that warmed the young man's heart; his purse and house were open to him. Nor did he stop at mere offers; he encouraged him in his arduous endeavours, and he showed paternal joy in his success. These are real and absolute virtues in a great man. There is so little encouragement to literary ambition abroad in the world, especially in this country. Those who hold the place of judges in the literary world (including in this class those whose trade is criticism as well as amateurs) are so afraid of compromising their reputation; and the rest of society dare not pronounce an opinion for themselves; so that, except in those instances in which, by a happy hit or servile fosterage of prejudices, popular favour is gained, and a *speedy sale of an edition* gives undeniable proof of success, authors of promise do not meet with the tithe of the encouragement necessary to sustain them hopeful and glad in their laborious career. Voltaire's sensitive heart felt that praise and sympathy were the proper food of the young aspirant, and as necessary as food, in keeping up that buoyant and confiding spirit which alone enables him to develope all his powers; he displayed, therefore, in voice and manner, and in actions, such earnest sympathy as served as the dearest reward and encouragement to the author. His kindness to Marmontel was unalterable, but their intercourse was broken off by his expatriation. Marmontel, accompanied by a friend, visited him at Les Delices soon after his arrival in Switzerland. "Our welcome," he narrates, "was the most singular and original in the world. Voltaire was in bed when we arrived: he held out his arms, and wept with joy, as he embraced me. 'You find me dying,' he said, 'and you come to restore, or to receive my last sigh.' My companion was frightened at this commencement; but I, who had heard Voltaire declare himself dying a hundred times before, made him a sign

not to be alarmed. In fact, a moment afterwards, the dying man made us sit by his bedside. 'My friend,' said he to me, 'I am delighted to see you — especially at a time when I have a man with me whom you will be glad to hear. It is M. de l'Ecluse, formerly surgeon-dentist to the late king of Prussia, now possessor of an estate near Montargis; he is a delightful man. Do you not know him?' — 'The only M. de l'Ecluse I know,' I replied, 'was an actor at the comic opera.' 'That is he, my friend — the very man. If you know him, you have heard him sing the song of the Remouleur, which he acted and sang so well.' And then, with his bare arms and sepulchral voice, Voltaire began to imitate l'Ecluse. We laughed heartily; but he continued, seriously, — 'I imitate him badly — you must hear M. de l'Ecluse — it is truth itself — how delighted you will be! Go and see madame Denis. Ill as I am, I shall rise to dine at table. The pleasure of seeing you has suspended my sufferings, and I feel quite alive again.'

"Madame Denis received us with that cordiality which is the charm of her character. She presented M. de l'Ecluse to us, and at dinner Voltaire encouraged him by the most flattering praises to give us the pleasure of hearing him. We appeared charmed — need was — for Voltaire would not have forgiven faint applause. Our subsequent ramble in his garden was employed in talking of Paris — the newspapers, the theatres, the 'Encyclopédie,' and the unhappy 'Le Franc de Pompignan,' the butt of all his jests. His physician, he said, having ordered him to hunt him every day for two hours, he charged me to assure our friends that they should receive a fresh epigram every day; and he was faithful to his promise. On our return from our walk, he played at chess with M. Gaulard, who respectfully allowed him to win; then we talked of the drama, and of the revolution in acting brought about by Mlle. Clairon. I exhausted all the little eloquence I possessed to inspire him with the

same enthusiasm that I felt myself for this actress; and I was enjoying the impression I appeared to make, when, interrupting me, he exclaimed with transport — 'That is exactly like madame Denis — she has improved most astonishingly. I wish you could see her play Zaire, Alzire, Idamè — it is the perfection of talent.' Madame Denis compared to Clairon! My ardour was checked in a moment; so true it is that taste accommodates itself to the objects it possesses. In the evening, I drew Voltaire out about the king of Prussia. He spoke with a sort of lofty magnanimity; like a man who disdained an easy revenge, or as a lover pardons a mistress, whom he deserts, for the indignation and blame she expresses. The conversation at supper turned on the literary men he most esteemed; and it was easy to discern those whom he really loved — it was those who made the most public boast of his friendship. Before we went to rest, he read us two new cantos of the 'Pucelle,' and Madame Denis remarked to us that this was the only day since his arrival at Les Delices that he had passed without shutting himself up in his study during some portion of it. The next day we had the discretion to leave him during a part of the morning to himself. I told him that we would wait till he rang. He was visible at eleven o'clock, but was still in bed. 'Young man,' said he to me, 'I hope you have not renounced poetry: let me see what you have lately written.' * * * Before dinner he took me to pay some visits in Geneva; and, speaking of his intercourse with the Genevese, he said, 'It is agreeable to live in a country whose sovereigns send to ask you to lend them your carriage when they come to dine with you.' His house was open to them, they passed whole days there. * * *

"In the evening, at supper, our kings and their mistresses were the subjects of conversation; and Voltaire, while making a comparison of the gallantry of the old court and the present one, displayed that abundant memory from which nothing interesting

escaped. From madame de la Vallière to madame de Pompadour, the anecdotic history of the two reigns, with that of the regency between, passed in review with a rapidity and a brilliancy of design and colouring quite dazzling. However he reproached himself for having robbed M. de l'Ecluse of moments which he said he could have rendered far more diverting, and begged him to repair his fault by giving us some scenes of the 'Ecosseures,' at which he laughed like a child.

"The next was our last day. As we were to depart early on the following morning, we agreed with madame Denis and messieurs Hubert and Cramer to prolong the pleasure of being together, by sitting up and conversing till the hour of departure. Voltaire insisted on making one of us: in vain we pressed him to go to bed; more wakeful than ourselves, he read us several cantos of 'Joan.' I was delighted; for, if Voltaire, in reading serious poetry, affected, as it appeared to me, too monotonous a cadence, and too marked an emphasis, no one ever recited familiar and comic verses with so much native grace and tact: his eyes and smile had an expression I never saw in any other man. Our mutual adieu moved us to tears; more on my part, indeed, than his, as was fit; for, in addition to my gratitude, and the many causes I had for being attached to him, I left him in exile."

Marmontel's account relates to Voltaire's early residence in the neighbourhood of Geneva. Madame de Genlis visited him in 1776. Being at Geneva, she wrote to propose paying him a visit. The poet replied graciously. "When I received his answer," she continues, "I was seized with sudden fright. I remembered all I had heard related of those who paid Ferney a first visit. It is the custom, especially for young women, to tremble, grow pale, and even faint, on perceiving Voltaire: they throw themselves into his arms, they weep, and show an agitation which resembles the most passionate love. This is the etiquette of a presentation

at Ferney; and M. de Voltaire is so used to it, that calm and politeness must appear either impertinent or stupid.

"I left Geneva in time, according to my calculation, to arrive at Ferney just before Voltaire's dinner hour; but my watch was wrong, and I did not discover my error till I arrived. There is no awkwardness more disagreeable than to be too early when going to dine with those who know how to occupy their mornings. Wishing really to please a celebrated man, who was kind enough to receive me, I dressed myself with elegance, and never before wore so many feathers and flowers. I took with me a German painter, M. Ott: he was very clever, but with very little literary knowledge, and, above all, had never read a line of Voltaire; but he felt the desirable enthusiasm only by hearing of him. He was in a state of ecstacy on approaching Ferney. I admired and envied his transport. We entered the drawing room; it was empty. The servants seemed surprised and hurried; the bells rang, and all gave signs of the truth, that we had arrived an hour too soon. We saw, at the end of the room, an oil painting magnificently framed; we hurried to examine it; and, to our great surprise, found it was a mere daub, representing Voltaire with a glory round his head, with the family of Calas kneeling before him, while he trod under foot his enemies Freron and Pompignan. The picture was the invention of a bad Genevese artist, who made a present of it to Voltaire. But it seemed the silliest thing in the world to hang it up in his drawing room. At length the door opened, and madame Denis and madame de Saint Julien entered; they announced that Voltaire would soon appear. Madame de Saint Julien was very amiable, and is passing the summer at Ferney. She calls Voltaire 'my philosopher,' and he calls her 'my butterfly.' She proposed a walk to me, and I was delighted; for I felt embarrassed at the idea of seeing the master of the house, and was glad to delay for a few

minutes the formidable interview. We went on the terrace, from which the magnificent view of the lake and mountains might have been seen, had they not had the bad taste to raise a trellice, covered with a thick foliage that concealed all, so that the view was only to be perceived through little openings too small for my head; and, besides, the trellice was so low, that my feathers caught every moment. I was obliged to stoop, and this fatiguing attitude was ill suited to enable me to enjoy the conversation of madame de Saint Julien, who, short, and in a morning dress, walked at her ease, and conversed agreeably. At length we were told that Voltaire was in the drawing room. I felt so harassed and frightened that I would have given the world to have found myself in my inn at Geneva; but my companion, judging me by herself, drew me along quickly. We returned to the house. As soon as I had collected myself we entered, and I found myself in the presence of Voltaire. Madame de Saint Julien invited me to embrace him, saying that it would please him. I addressed him with the respect due to his genius and his age. He took my hand and kissed it, and I know not why, but I was touched by this act of common gallantry coming from him.

"During dinner, M. de Voltaire was by no means agreeable; he appeared to be continually angry with his servants, calling to them so loudly that I started. I had been told beforehand of this habit, so singular before strangers; but it was evident that it was merely a habit, for the servants neither appeared surprised nor troubled. After dinner, knowing that I was a musician, Voltaire asked madame Denis to play. She had a method which reminded one of the music of the days of Louis XIV. She had just finished a piece of Rameau, when a little girl of seven years old entered, and threw herself into Voltaire's arms, calling him papa. He received her caresses with sweetness; and, seeing that I looked on the picture with extreme pleasure, he told me that this was the daughter of the descendant of the

great Corneille, whom he had adopted. Several visitors from Geneva dropped in, and afterwards he proposed a drive, and he and his niece, madame de Saint Julien, and myself entered the carriage, and he took us to the village to see the houses he is building, and the charitable establishments he has founded. He is greater here than in his books, for so ingenious a goodness appears in all, that one wonders that the same hand which wrote so much blasphemy, could form such noble, wise, and useful works. He shows this village to all strangers, but unpretendingly. He speaks of it with kindness and simplicity; he mentions all that he has done, but with no appearance of boasting. On returning to the chateau, the conversation was very animated: it was night before I took my leave.

"The portraits and busts of Voltaire are all very like; but no artist has painted his eyes well. I expected to find them brilliant and full of fire; and they are, indeed, the most expressive of intellect that I ever saw; but they are full, at the same time, of softness and inexpressible tenderness. The very soul of Zaire shone in those eyes. His smile and laugh, which is very malicious, changed at once this charming expression. He is very decrepid; and his old-fashioned dress makes him look older. He has a hollow voice, which produces a singular effect, especially as he is in the habit of speaking very loud, although he is not deaf. When neither religion nor his enemies are mentioned, his conversation is simple, unpretending, and delightful. It appeared as if he could not endure the expression of opinions differing from his own on any point. On the slightest contradiction his voice became shrill and his manner decided. He has lost much of the manners of the world: and this is natural; ever since he has lived on this estate no one visits him but to cover him with flattery. His opinions are oracles; all around is at his feet. The admiration he inspires is the continual subject of conversation, and the most extravagant exagge-

rations now appear ordinary homage. No king has ever been the object of such excessive adulation."

Voltaire, however, though he liked flattery, often avoided it, by not receiving the guests that poured in. Madame Denis did the honours of the house; and many a traveller, who had gone far out of his way to visit the Man of the Age, left the chateau without seeing him. It was thus he treated the comte de Guibert, esteemed in those days as a young man of promising talents, but who is best known to us as the object of mademoiselle de l'Espinasse's attachment. Guibert, after passing five days at Ferney, left it without seeing its master. Arriving at Geneva, he sent him four verses, which wittily, though somewhat blasphemously, expressed his regret. The wit pleased.; the blasphemy, perhaps, pleased still more, as showing him to be of his own way of thinking; and Voltaire instantly sent after him, invited him back, and treated him with kindness and distinction. Many anecdotes are told of the bad reception he gave others. But as every one, and in particular every pretender to literature, thought it necessary to visit Ferney, no wonder that he was often pushed to extremities by their intrusion and pretensions, and, impatient and whimsical as he was, got rid of them, as the humour dictated, by open rudeness or covert ridicule.

The astonishing vivacity and energy of Voltaire's temperament led him to create, like Don Quixote, giants with whom to fight; but he was not always moved by the heroic benevolence that animated the Spanish knight, but by childish or more blameable whims. He had built a church at Ferney (the one belonging to the parish being mean and in disrepair), and went to mass, for the edification of his tenantry. After mass he delivered an exhortation against theft (some of the builders of his church having been guilty of carrying off old materials), which, being against all canonical rules, scandalised the congregation and incensed the priest. The bishop of the diocese, an

ignorant, intolerant man, hearing of the desecration, applied to the king of France for a *lettre de cachet* against Voltaire. His request was not listened to; but the imagination of Voltaire was set on fire by the intelligence; nor can we wonder, considering that he had entered the Bastille, as a prisoner, three different times. He burnt a vast quantity of papers; he dismissed every guest; and remained alone with his secretary and father Adam, an ex-Jesuit, who resided with him. At first he thought it would be necessary to fly; but soon his restless fancy suggested another mode of defending himself. The bishop, carrying on the war, forbade any of his inferior clergy to confess, absolve, or administer the communion to the seigneur of Ferney. Considering his avowed and contemptuous disbelief in Christianity, it had been more dignified in Voltaire to abstain from participating in its mysteries; but he had not the most remote idea of the meaning and uses of dignity. His impetuosity, his love of the ridiculous, his determination to vanquish and crush his enemies, by whatever means, were paramount to any loftier sentiment of calm disdain. He said, "We shall see whether the bishop or I win the day." Accordingly, he feigned illness, took to his bed, and insisted on receiving religious consolations as a dying man. The priest of the parish refused to comply for a length of time; and Voltaire, to gain his point, signed a paper declaratory of his respect for the Catholic religion. The whole scene was indecorous, — insulting to the priest, and unworthy of the poet. He gained his point at last, and frightened the curate so much that he fell ill and died; while his conduct in the church, his angry expostulations with the clergy, and his confession of faith became the wonder and gossip of Paris.

It is more pleasing to contemplate the good deeds of this versatile and extraordinary man, whose activity astonished his contemporaries*, and, considering his infirmities and age, seem almost superhuman. The

* Lettres de Madame du Deffand à Horace Walpole, vol. ii.

civil troubles of Geneva caused a number of exiles. The fugitives, destitute and suffering, were received at Ferney, and treated with hospitality and generosity. Voltaire's first idea was to found the little town of Versoi, on the banks of the lake of Geneva. He applied to the duke de Choiseul for protection and funds. These were at first granted; but the disgrace of the minister ruined the infant town, and its founder was obliged to restrict his exertions to his own colony at Ferney. He caused commodious houses to be built, and the place, which was before a miserable hamlet, inhabited by peasants in the last degree of penury, became a pleasant village, filled by industrious artisans, who carried on a considerable trade in watchmaking. It is to this village that Voltaire led madame du Genlis, and the sight of it filled her with respect for his enlarged views and benevolent heart.

Nor was this the only place that owed the blessings of prosperity to him. By most persevering and courageous representations he induced the chancellor Maupeou to enfranchise the peasants of a territory among the mountains of Jura, who were serfs to the monastery of St. Claude, and suffered the most unendurable grievances from the feudal laws still in force. Afterwards, when Louis XVI. came to the throne, he asked for various exemptions from taxes from the minister Turgot for the town of Gex, which flourished in consequence, till Turgot was exiled, his ordinances cancelled, and the town was ruined. His colony fell under the same ban, and he shared the general loss. He was grieved, but not disheartened. "It is true," he wrote to his valued and steady friend the comte d'Argental, "that I have had the folly, in my eighty-third year, to commence an undertaking above my strength. I must abandon it, and wait till I grow younger. My strange fate, which led me from Paris to the frontiers of Switzerland, and forced me to change a filthy hamlet into a pretty town, a quarter of a league long, follows me; she does not restore my youth, but crushes me with the stones

of the houses I have built. A change of ministry in France has deprived my colony of all the advantages I had obtained; and the good I have done my new country has turned to mischief. I put the last drop of my blood into this useful establishment, without any view except that of doing good — my blood is lost, and all I have to do is to die of a consumption." He wrote to another friend: "Ferney, which you saw a wretched village, has become a pretty town. I scarcely know how this has been brought about; but I know that it has ruined me. It was ridiculous in so insignificant a man as me to build a town."

The correspondence which this undertaking necessitated was immense. To this occupation he added a dispute on the merits of Shakspeare, in which an entire want of taste and of knowledge, and a superfluity of flippancy and insult, were the prominent features. It raised a laugh among a few, but did no honour either to his cause or himself.

What, at its outset, seemed a more tranquil and happy reign, had begun in France. The latter days of Louis XV. were utterly disgraceful. He had dispersed the parliament, it is true, which, by its prejudices and injustice, had become odious; but it was replaced by another, which reformed no abuse, while it was conspicuous only for servile submission to the royal authority. Enlightened and popular ministers — Choiseul and Turgot — were exiled to make room for men of the old leaven, who had no apprehension of the growing necessities of the times; while his thrusting upon the court a low-born and infamous mistress, completed the degradation of the king's position: and the society of Paris, opposed to that of the court, acquired influence and dignity. The first acts of Louis the Sixteenth's reign, being to recal the disgraced and popular ministers, and to exhibit every token of sympathy for the distresses of the subject, inspired hope. Voltaire ardently desired to revisit the capital, to feel himself among his friends, and to enjoy the sensation which his

presence, after so long an absence, would not fail to create. The inhabitants of Ferney saw their benefactor depart with tears. He promised to return in six weeks; and so firmly intended to keep this resolution, that he put no order into his affairs or papers before his departure, thinking it not worth while, as his absence would be so short.

1788. Ætat. 84. On the 10th of February he arrived in the capital, accompanied by monsieur and madame de Villette and madame Denis. Madame de Villette was a protegée of Voltaire. She had been destined for a convent by her parents; and, in despair, wrote to the patriarch of Ferney to extricate her from such a fate. He offered her a home in his house. She was gentle, beautiful, and clever. M. de Villette, a gentleman of fortune, fell in love with and married her. She went by the name of Belle et Bonne among her friends. Voltaire had the peculiarity, which usually attends men of genius, of gathering about him a society composed principally of women, and she was a chief favourite.

Voltaire brought with him his newly written tragedy of "Irene." He had the notion indelibly impressed, that, to secure his position in Paris, he must acquire popularity; and that a successful tragedy was the sure means of acquiring it. In the present instance he did not need such support. No conqueror, returned from enslaving a province, was ever received with such enthusiastic marks of triumph. La Harpe well observes, that the generation who had witnessed Voltaire's earlier struggles and clouded fame, had nearly died away; all those born during the space of the last forty years found the world full of his fame. His persecutions, his mode of life, his attacks on religion and on persons, the mischief he had caused, and the good he had done, were the chief topics of interest: more than all, the brilliancy of his genius dazzled, its versatility delighted mankind. Even his pettishnesses, his whims, his follies, ever varying and upheld by him with earnestness and vigour, kept alive public attention. That this man,

the subject of all tongues and all pens, should emerge from his seclusion among the Alps, and, in his eighty-fifth year, come to take his part in society, and gather the applause of a theatrical audience, excited, nearly to frenzy, the curiosity, the admiration, and interest of every inhabitant of Paris.

Condorcet, who witnessed his arrival, in his "Life of Voltaire," madame du Deffand, in her "Letters to Horace Walpole," and Grimm, in his "Literary Correspondence," give a vivid picture of this last triumphant but fatal visit to Paris. He arrived in good health; though his first note to madame du Deffand said, "I arrive, dying; and only wish to revive to throw myself at your feet." He received all his friends with cordiality and gaiety, and delighted them with the charm that belonged to his manners. All Paris pressed to see him; his apartment was never empty: he received more than 300 persons, one after the other, and had something witty and agreeable to say to all. Meanwhile, as he was in reality afflicted by a weakening and very painful disease, his more familiar friends began to tremble for the result of this new and exciting scene. "I paid him my second visit yesterday," writes madame du Deffand, "on the 22d of February. It was not so agreeable as the first. We were received by his niece, who is certainly the best woman in the world, but the most tiresome; by M. de Villette, who is the dullest man, and his young wife, who, they say, is amiable, and goes by the name of Belle et Bonne with Voltaire and his friends. We did not find him in the drawing-room; he was shut up with his secretary, and begged me to wait. His friends told me that he was overwhelmed with fatigue; that he had read the whole of his tragedy that afternoon to the actors, and had made them rehearse, and was so exhausted that he could scarcely speak. I wished to go away; but they detained me, and Voltaire sent me four lines he had made on his statute by Pigal, to engage me to remain. After a good quarter of an hour he came in. He said

that he was dead—that he could not speak. I offered to leave him; but he would not let me. He spoke to me of his play. He has no other subject in his head: it has caused him to come to Paris, and it will kill him if it does not succeed."

Nor was his tragedy his only subject of anxiety. He was told that Louis XVI. had asked, on hearing of his arrival, if the interdiction to his residence in Paris had ever been taken off. A question which seemed to show his disapprobation; but the young queen and her friends, and the count d'Artois, were borne away by the stream of fashion and friendlily inclined. A few days after his arrival he fell ill. His mode of life in Paris was very different from that which he led at Ferney; there he was subject to none of the calls of society; he saw few visitors, and left madame Denis to do the honours of the house — enjoying in his own person the most entire liberty, passing the greater part of his day in bed, or in study; at other times walking in his grounds and over his estate, directing the improvements and enjoying the pleasure of creating his colony, and witnessing its prosperity. His new mode of life deranged his health, a vomiting of blood came on, and his life was in danger. The vivacity of the French disposition was shown at this moment. All Paris was in alarm. The priests gathered round — Voltaire thought it right to quiet them by making a profession of faith. How far the all-seeing and infinitely pure Being can be propitiated by a falsehood on the lips of a dying man, may be considered doubtful; but the clergy thought more of their own temporal victory than the higher questions of religion and morality. These might have been satisfied by a declaration given by Voltaire to a friend, which said, "I die worshipping God, loving my friends, not hating my enemies, and detesting superstition." Nor was this the only disquiet that attended his sick-bed: his friends quarrelled round it concerning the physicians who attended, and wrangling and dissension — the fruits of the vanity, not

the affection, of his friends — disturbed the peace necessary for his convalescence.

The vital principle was still strong, and he recovered. He made use of his renewed strength to visit the academy, and to be present at the representation of his tragedy. The enthusiasm was at its height. He was almost crushed to death both at the Louvre and the theatre, notwithstanding the exertions of the soldiers to keep a passage clear. The academicians received him rather as the sovereign of literature than as an equal. At the theatre his reception was still more flattering. His bust was crowned on the stage, and the audience were in a transport of delight; tears of enthusiasm and joy marked the feeling of the spectators, who saw his attenuated figure with sorrow, and every one was eager to offer him assistance when he left the theatre. His triumph failed only in that the court still looked askance on him; and his very presence in Paris was rather connived at than permitted. Still the manifestations of public favour might satisfy a man even insatiable of applause. He was deeply touched. "They wish to smother me with roses," he exclaimed, as he felt his feeble frame sink from exhaustion.

At this moment, at the very zenith of human glory, —when the whole population of the then most civilised capital in the world seemed to breathe his name only, to see him only in the world, to crowd round him in admiration and triumph, — and while their cry, "There is the saviour of the Calas," rewarded him for his benevolent exertions, — then, had he retired to his tranquil seclusion at Ferney, he might have prolonged his existence. But this he was not permitted to do. Madame Denis was heartily tired of the mountain solitude, which, as Voltaire grew older and more averse to show himself, became a complete seclusion. He earnestly desired to return; but, day after day, the solicitations of his friends induced him to prolong his stay. His secretary, Wagner, gives a lively picture of the

struggles between him and his niece. The physician, Tronchin, had begged Voltaire to return to Ferney. "You must feel," he said, "that a tree transplanted at eighty-four years of age must perish." "Am I able to support the journey?" asked the old man. "Yes, I answer for it on my head," said Tronchin; and Voltaire, charmed with the prospect, gave instant orders for his departure. Madame Denis argued against it. "I must return," he replied. "I adore the country; it gives me new life. You, who detest it, can remain here, and amuse yourself." Who told you that I hated it?" asked his niece. "My experience," he replied quickly and sternly.

The cabals which formed the spirit of French society in those days multiplied to keep the old man in Paris. He was induced to buy a house; but he made the purchase more for madame Denis than himself, and said "that instead of a dwelling he had bought a tomb." He still persisted, while he was in Paris, in attending the academy, where he wished to introduce the plan of a new dictionary, and in interesting himself with theatrical concerns. He drank coffee to support himself when he felt his strength failing; and this producing fever and pain, he took opium to procure calm. Soon his illness took a dangerous turn, and no remedies could alleviate it; a mortification came on, which caused him unspeakable agonies. At length, he fell into a state of exhaustion and torpor, and died on the 30th of May, 1778.

According to the scandalous custom of the French clergy, impediments were raised to his decent interment. To baffle these, his death was kept secret for several days. A grave was denied him in the parish where he died, and the body was transported to the Abbey de Scellieres, in the diocese of Troyes, belonging to his nephew, and buried in the church. A stone was placed above, bearing the words, only—"Ci-git Voltaire." At the same time orders were issued by the government forbidding the newspapers to comment on his death either for

praise or blame; the actors to represent his plays; and the masters of schools to allow their pupils to learn his verses. Such arbitrary and puerile acts always destroy themselves, and add to, instead of detract from, the reputation of the man against whom they are levelled.

Other governments showed more liberality. Catherine of Russia, who had corresponded with him, and whom he had held up to the admiration of the world, openly mourned his death. His old friend Frederic of Prussia caused his academy to hold a meeting in his honour, during which an elaborate eulogium, written by himself, was pronounced.

The character of Voltaire is displayed in the preceding pages. He was a zealous, a warm, and constant friend. When Thiriot acted weakly and injuriously — sending to Frederic of Prussia the libels published against his friend—madame du Chatelet and others implored him to renounce him; but Voltaire, while he reproved, let no word of unkindness escape. In later days, d'Alembert wrote to tell him that the duke de Richelieu was acting a false part by him, and prevented his plays from being acted. Voltaire could not be touched in a more sensitive place; but he replied, "that such might be true, but that he could not quarrel with a friend whom he had known for fifty years." He was, it is true, a rancorous enemy — never pardoning, but visiting any injury done him with the severest retaliation of sarcasm and ridicule. He was singularly benevolent and generous. His letters are crowded with instances. His exertions in favour of the oppressed have been partly recorded in the preceding pages; it would require many more to commemorate every instance of his active and enlightened benevolence. When, on the death of Louis XV., he thought he could get annulled the sentence against the chevalier d'Etallonde, he procured his leave of absence from the king of Prussia, supplied him with money for his journey to Ferney, and kept him there a year, while he vainly exerted his utmost influence in his favour. He bitterly

deplored his failure. The spectacle of injustice filled him with anguish. His mind endured torture from the sense of injury done others, and he felt it imperative to prevent or repair crime. The sight, the idea only, of a triumphant or unpunished oppressor, excited the liveliest emotions of compassion and indignation in his sensitive and proud spirit. His private benevolence was not less active. The bookseller Jore, whose imprudence and want of fidelity had endangered his liberty, applied to him in distress, and was relieved, with expressions of kindness. A friend died in Paris; his wife, who had been living separate from him, seized on all he left, and an old and faithful servant was left destitute. Voltaire instantly made her an allowance. We might multiply such instances; and while this sad world is filled with the needy, the afflicted, and the oppressed, it is impossible not warmly to admire a man who sympathises in the necessities of his fellow-creatures and alleviates their sufferings.

The great and lasting blame attached to him arises from the inveterate and bitter hostility he expressed to Christianity. The texture of his mind partly occasioned this. He was incapable of understanding or feeling the sublime, the simple, and the pure. The poetry of the Bible was a dead letter to him; and this may be the more readily accounted for, as the living French poet, La Martine, whose nature is pious and reverential, mentions that he never felt its sublimity till a few years ago, when translated by his friend M. de Genoude. Impurity and grossness was also a part of Voltaire's nature; and these led him to depreciate the beauty of the Saviour's character, and the morality of the gospel.

The French clergy of those days must bear, however, much of the blame. Voltaire ardently desired to crush a church which, in power, showed itself utterly devoid of the principles of Christianity. Arnaud, Fénélon, the recluses of Port Royal, and the Quietists, had been its victims. Racine, Boileau, men of highly

moral and pious characters, were injured and calumniated; and this because they did not belong to the reigning party in the church. What wonder, then, that Voltaire and his friends were led to despise men who made their religion the pretence for indulging their worst passions, and were even induced to think ill of the system of which they proclaimed themselves the sole fitting supports. Let Christians be real disciples of the Gospel, and men like Voltaire will neither have the power nor the will to injure the religion they profess.

We have no space for elaborate criticism of Voltaire's works. We have alluded to many in the progress of this biography. His "Historical Essay on the Manners and Spirit of Nations," in spite of its mistakes in facts and errors of opinion, is a monument of vast genius. His "Age of Louis XIV." is a beautiful work, though we are not sure that his mode of dividing the subject is the best. Many long chapters, devoted to the narration of wars, unmixed by the detail of individual passions or public struggles, which are thrown into separate portions of the work, break and weaken the interest.

His plays have not the loftiness of Corneille, nor the soft tenderness of Racine; but many of them possess much passion and power. His poetic faculties, such as they were, decayed soonest; his latter tragedies are weak and poor compositions. As a didactic poet, he ranks low; as an epic, he is not considered in these days to take any rank at all; as a burlesque, grossness and indelicacy occasion his verses to be read only by those whose praise is not worth having; as a critic, he was unfair and uncourteous, always ready to make ridicule stand for argument, and not unwilling to advance what was false, when the truth did not sufficiently support him. Thus he could translate a speech of Falstaff, declaring that it was meant to be tragic, because it occurred in a tragedy. His lighter productions are among his best, and, though sullied by his peculiar defects, are full of genius. The great characteristic of Voltaire is, that he scarcely ever penned a line that is

not instinct with spirit and life and genius. If you open by chance any volume of his works, you will be struck at once by the strength and felicity of his expressions — the vivacity of the sentiment — the penetration with which he detects the false — the wit which gives sparkle and point to all he says. He was, it is true, of the second order of minds, but first among the second; and such was his perfection in his art, as far as it went, that he contrived, while living, to fill a first place, and will always receive a larger share of attention and praise than his intrinsic merits deserve.

ROUSSEAU.

1712—1778.

It is impossible to imagine a character in stronger contrast with Voltaire, than that of Rousseau. They possessed but one quality in common. It is difficult to know what to call it. In ordinary men it would be named egotism, or vanity. It is that lively and intimate apprehension of their own individuality, sensations, and being, which appears to be one of the elements of that order of minds which feel impelled to express their thoughts and disseminate their views and opinions through the medium of writing;—men of imagination, and eloquence, and mental energy. This quality is good as long as it renders an author diligent, earnest, and sincere; it is evil when it deprives him of the power of justly appreciating his powers and position, and causes him to fancy himself the centre, as it were, of the universe. Rousseau was its victim; it was exaggerated till his mind became diseased; and one false idea becoming fixed and absorbing, a sort of madness ensued. He was too alive to the sense of his own actions and feelings; and as he had committed many faults, not to say crimes, the recollection of these, joined to his sincere love of virtue, produced a struggle in his mind full of misery and remorse.

Jean Jacques Rousseau was born at Geneva, on the 28th June, 1712. His birth cost the life of his mother, and was, he says, "the first of his misfortunes." His father was a watchmaker, and clever in his trade — it was all he had to subsist upon. Jean Jacques was born weakly, and with some organic defect, that rendered the rearing difficult and precarious. A sister of his

father devoted herself to him. According to his own account, his childish years were happy. Loved and caressed by many relations, and watched over by his aunt, he was indulged without being spoiled. His father taught him to read, after the business of the day was over. That his attention might be excited, the long romances of Scuderi and the elder Crebillon were put into his hands. His father shared the pleasure he took in this occupation, and parent and child often sat up all night to indulge in it: a taste for the romantic, and a precocious knowledge of the language of passion and sentiment, were thus impressed upon the boy. When the collection of romances was ended, they turned to other books. They had a good collection, being a portion of the library of his mother's father, a minister of the church. The "History of the Church and the Empire," by Le Seur; Bossuet's "Discourse on Universal History;" Plutarch's "Lives;" Ovid's "Metamorphoses;" the works of Molière, La Bruyere, and Fontenelle, were among them. The boy read to his father as he sat at work. "I thus," Rousseau writes, "imbibed a singular taste, perhaps unexampled at my age. Plutarch, above all, became my favourite reading, and the pleasure I took in it cured me somewhat of my love for romances, and I soon learnt to prefer Agesilaus, Brutus, and Aristides, to Oorondates, Artamenes, and Juba. These delightful books, and the conversations to which they gave rise between my father and me, formed that independent and republican spirit, that proud untameable character, impatient of yoke and servitude, which has tormented me through life, in situations ill adapted to foster it. With my thoughts continually occupied by Rome and Greece, — living, so to speak, with their great men, born myself the citizen of a republic, and the son of a father whose strongest passion was love of his country,— I warmed by his example—I fancied myself Greek or Roman — I became the man whose life I read. The account of acts of constancy and intrepidity which struck me

1720. Ætat. 8.

caused my eyes to flash, and gave expression to my voice. One day, as I was relating at table the history of Scævola, the listeners were frightened to see me advance and hold my hand above a brazier to represent his action."

These happy days, which, had they continued, might have blotted many pages of error and suffering from Rousseau's life, ended too soon. The darling of all, he lived in an atmosphere of love. He had one elder brother, who, treated with negligence, ran away, and took refuge in Germany. Not long after, his father had a quarrel with a French officer; and rather than submit to the short, but, as it appeared to him, unjust, imprisonment with which he was menaced in consequence, expatriated himself, leaving his little son with his sister, who had married his wife's brother; and the family was thus doubly related. Jean Jaques was now sent, together with a young cousin, to board at Bossey, with a minister named Lambercier. His life here was more pleasurable than generally falls to the lot of childhood; — the boys had their hours of tuition, and their hours of play — they quarrelled and made it up — they had their childish schemes, their holidays,—they were happy. Rousseau, in his "Confessions," well describes how these days of innocence and childish enjoyment were disturbed by an unjust punishment. The injustice sunk deep into the children's minds,— it despoiled their country home of all its charm; and this circumstance deserves mention, as it will always be found that the more children are treated with kindness and familiarity, the more necessary it is to guard against the slightest show of injustice. At a great school, accusation and punishment are often the effect of accident, and the boys lay less store by them; they are not pregnant with disgrace or shame,—many others, like themselves, are subject to the like, and it appears simply as one of the common hardships of life. But in domestic education they feel themselves to be a portion of the whole; and if that whole be harmonious, a discord, an act of

tyranny, that falls peculiarly on themselves, makes a frightful impression; it appears to enfranchise them from the tacit vow of obedience under which they before lived, and causes them to regard their elders as treacherous enemies.

Leaving their country *pension*, the boys continued to lead a happy life at the house of Bernard, who was an engineer. He brought up his son to the same profession, and Rousseau shared his cousin's lessons. At length it was decided that he must adopt some calling, by which to earn his livelihood: he was placed with a *greffier*, or attorney; but he disliked the employment, and neglected his duties; he was dismissed, and apprenticed to an engraver. Here he appears to have been neglected by his relations; and the vulgarity and violence of his master had the worst effect on his character. There was that in Rousseau, which is often found in the early years of genius, — detestation of control — rebellion against all forced application. Eager to occupy himself, if allowed the choice of employment; revolting from a routine, in which his own purposes and inclinations were not consulted; it is one of the Sphinx's riddles, not yet divined, how to break in the daring and aspiring spirit of youth to the necessities of life, without exciting discontent and rebellion. The heart opening at that age more warmly to the affections, nature seems to point out the way,—but who in society, as it is formed, takes nature for a director?

Beaten, maltreated, hard worked, Rousseau became idle, timid, and lying. It is strange, but true, how, in the little republic of Geneva, money is perhaps more the main spring of existence than in larger states, and how early the children of the artizans are subjected to the grinding evils of penury. Brought up to earn their subsistence as soon as is practicable, the parents are eager to cast them wholly on their own exertions: and the numerous class of young people, male and female, decently born and bred, who, in that city, live by attendance in shops, by the needle, or the workman's tool, suffer

much of the excess of labour and poor living to which the inferior classes in our manufacturing towns are subject.

Rousseau, timid of heart, but with an imagination that warmed him to daring, was led into mischievous scrapes: the very ardour of his disposition occasioned his faults: he was treated like a vulgar apprentice, and he fell into the vices of such a position, without at the same time blunting that eagerness and romance that formed the essence of his character. In the midst of disgraceful scrapes, his love of reading returned. He had none of those fixed principles which would lead him to give due time to the work required of him by his master, and his leisure to his books; a new volume in hand, every other occupation was sacrificed to it; — he was beaten and ill-treated for his negligence; he became obstinate and taciturn, but never gave up his point. His books, and the day-dreams founded on them, which fabricated and painted a thousand romantic scenes, filled his heart in solitude; real life was replete with indignity and suffering; in reverie, he was enterprising, noble, and free.

Sunday — the day of leisure and liberty — was spent in rambles and games with his comrades. It is the law of Geneva to shut the gates early in the evening, and they are not opened on any pretence for any one till the following morning. The lad, once or twice too late, was punished severely for his negligence. On the third occasion he resolved rather to run away than to encounter the menaced chastisement. His last act was to send for his cousin Bernard, to take leave of him: the boy did not press him to stay — did not offer to mediate for him; he returned to his parents, while Rousseau turned his steps from his native city — a vagrant and a beggar.

No such aspect of things presented itself to the wanderer himself; — he was in his own eyes a hero in search of adventures; — he dreamt of all of brilliant and festive of which he had read in his romances, and while he slept under the roofs of peasants with whom he was acquainted, and who received him with cordial hospita-

lity, his reveries pictured castles and enamoured damsels, a fortune the gift of love, and lasting happiness the effect.

Rousseau was unfortunate at the outset. He had wandered about till he found himself at Confignon, in Savoy, a place two leagues distant from Geneva. He paid the curate, M. de Pontverre, a visit. His own account of his motives is suspicious: he says that he was anxious to see the descendant of men who figured in the history of the republic; that M. de Pontverre received him well, asked him to dinner, and invited him to be converted to the Roman catholic religion; and that he had not the heart to say nay to his kind entertainer. There is — and there was in those days still more — a great spirit of proselytism kept up among the priesthood of Savoy, hovering, as they do, close to a nest of heresy. Still, we cannot help imagining that the scheme was Rousseau's own, and that he presented himself as a willing convert — expecting thus to be made much of, and introduced in triumph to the houses of the catholic nobility. At any rate, M. de Pontverre behaved ill: he ought to have felt that it was more for the youth's permanent advantage to send him back to his friends, mediate for his pardon, and exhort him to regular and virtuous courses; and that to make a proselyte of him, and thus render his relations entirely hostile, and him an object of disgrace in his native city, while it opened no future career for earning an honest livelihood, was the worst step in the beginning of life that a young man could take. But M. de Pontverre, as a priest, thought differently; — if he did not invite the youth to abjure the religion of his country, he facilitated a scheme that sprang from any feeling rather than piety. Rousseau felt his pride fall, when his host told him that he would give him a letter to a charitable lady living at Annecy, who would forward his views. He saw, however, no other resource against starvation; and he yielded. Furnished by the curate with a letter, he set out — his head full of princesses, palaces, and castles, and in great hopes

that some fortunate adventure would present a more brilliant prospect than the one before him. None occurred. He arrived at Annecy; he saw madame de Warens; and in her and her kindness found embodied one of those romances of real life, which, if of less fairy and glittering hue to the eye, are equally magic-like to the heart, and do not less serve to alter the course of existence, and to metamorphose the soul.

The comtesse de Warens was a native of Vevay, in the Pays de Vaud: she had married when very young; and having no children, and not being happy in her marriage, she took occasion, when the king of Savoy, Victor Amadeo, was at Evian, to cross the lake, throw herself at his feet, and claim his protection as a convert to catholicism. The king, who was zealous in the cause of his religion, received her graciously, and settled on her a pension of 1500 Piedmontese livres. She was much loved at Vevay, and there was some danger of her being rescued against her will: to preserve his proselyte, the king was obliged to have her escorted to Annecy by a detachment of guards; where, under the direction of the titular bishop of Geneva, she abjured protestantism. She had lived for six years at Annecy, and was eight and twenty, when Rousseau first saw her. She was beautiful, and, above all, an expression of angelic sweetness and benevolence beamed in her face, that inspired him at once with hope, confidence, and gratitude. She felt the folly of the step he had taken; but, surrounded by priests and spies, she feared to show compassion, or to give him good advice; the few words she did say, to induce him to return to his father, were of no avail. Yet it was not easy to find the means of subsistence for him. At length one of her guests proposed that he should go to Turin, and enter the hospital established for the instruction of proselytes, where he could remain until his abjuration, when it might be supposed some charitable person would come forward to his assistance. Sad and humble was the prospect held out; but there appeared to be no other resource ex-

cept to return to Geneva,— an alternative he obstinately rejected. Some respectable persons were found who were going to Turin, and he accompanied them. The journey was performed on foot, and lasted nine days — nine happy days—when casting away all thought of the future, unincumbered by luggage, his expenses attended to by others, he wandered among the valleys of the Alps, crossed their summits, and beheld the happy garden which Piedmont presents to the traveller, just emerging from the snows of Savoy. The recollection of this delightful journey often made him wish to renew it in after life — and a pedestrian tour always appeared to him one of the chief happinesses of existence.

Once established in the hospital, he began to feel the importance of the step he was about to take. His conscience told him that he was making a traffic of religion, and he dimly appreciated the sin and disgrace of such a proceeding. Brought up in a bigoted calvinist city, he had been taught a holy horror for catholic ceremonies; still he fancied there was no escape: false shame — fear of starvation—a determination not to return to Geneva, caused him to silence his better thoughts. Yet he was eager to delay the fatal act; — he argued with the priests employed to teach him a new religion; and it was found necessary to provide one especially, who was capable of mastering the catechumen's objections by the arms of logic and learning. Finding that he could not answer the priest's arguments, Rousseau began to think that he might be in the right; and he yielded with good grace to the act of abjuration. After being received into the catholic church—after being absolved by a father inquisitor for the crime of heresy — twenty francs, collected at the church door, were put into his hands; he was recommended to be faithful to his new religion, and to lead a good life; and then he was dismissed, and found himself — the doors of his late abode closed behind — friendless and alone in the streets of Turin. Newly recovered liberty, however, at first sufficed to inspire him with happy sensations; and the very sight of the well-

built and well-peopled streets filled him with hopes for the future. Where there were so many rich and great, there could not fail, he thought, to be found a thousand eligible resources against want.

The resources he really found were in ill accord with the pictures his imagination formed. He was obliged to hire himself as a servant. At first he served a fair shopkeeper; and then became the attendant of an old countess Vercelli, with whom he lived till her death, which occurred only three months after. It was on this occasion that he committed that fault, remorse for which pursued him till his death. During the illness of his mistress he had abstracted a riband from her wardrobe, with the intent of bestowing it on a maid-servant of the house. The riband was missed, sought for, and found on him. False shame led him to deny the theft; and, when more closely questioned, he declared that the stolen riband had been given to him by the very girl on whom he had intended to bestow it. The two were confronted; the innocent servant implored him with tears to retract his falsehood, but he resolutely maintained his story. He was believed. He tells this tale in his "Confessions;" he declares that the avowal cost him more pain than any other—that remorse never ceased to pursue him—the image of the injured girl, reproaching him for the wrong he had done her, often haunted his dreams—it weighed on his conscience as the most atrocious crime. He had sought merely to shelter himself, and false shame prevented his retracting the accusation once made; but the thought of his victim driven to want and infamy by his lie made him often look on his after sufferings as but the just retribution of his crime. This is one of the laws of life. The shadows of our past actions stalk beside us during our existence, and never cease to torment or to soothe, according as they are ill or good, that mysterious portion of mind termed conscience.

Rousseau was now again thrown back upon independent poverty. His time was not all lost: he frequented the society of an excellent man, a Savoyard

abbé, M. Gaime, who enlightened his mind as to his real duties, instructed him in the better part of religion, and corrected his false estimate of society. These lessons were often forgotten, at least, inasmuch as they ought to have served as guides for conduct; but they were as dew upon a field; in due time, the hidden seeds of thought, then sown, sprang up. While thus unemployed, and not looking beyond the hour, the nephew of his late mistress sent for him, and told him that he had found a situation: he was to become a domestic in a noble family of Turin: this was a fall for the youth's pride, but he had no other resource against want.

He was treated with infinite kindness by the various members of the family: he distinguished himself by his intelligence; and the younger son, who was destined for clerical honours, became interested for him: he questioned him as to his acquirements; and, finding that he had received the rudiments of education, undertook to teach him Latin. He might now have been happy: had he shown himself steady, he would have been advanced by his protectors. The Italians, satisfied with the acknowledged distinctions of rank, have no ridiculous pride, and are ready to treat inferiors on an equality, if their education raises them to their mental level. Many careers, closed against the ignoble in France, were open in Italy; and these were offered to Rousseau's view as spurs to his ambition. He was won for a brief period; but, though he dreamt of climbing, he did not like going up the ladder—and a caprice ruined all. He fell in with a merry fellow, who had been his fellow apprentice in Geneva, and who was about to return to that city. Rousseau, charmed by his wild gay spirits —allured by the attractions of a mountain journey made on foot, with the idea of madame de Warens in the misty distance—threw up his situation with a careless show of ingratitude that disgusted his protectors, and set out again a beggar, but rendered wildly happy by the project of travelling among the valleys and over the mountains of Savoy, with a little toy fountain as all his

treasure; round which he believed the peasants would gather, and pay for their amusement by their hospitality. The fountain was soon spoiled; but they had a little money, and enjoyed their rambles till the sight of Annecy recalled Rousseau to the realities of life.

Madame de Warens had, however, none of that rigid uprightness which thrusts the young into misery because their untaught impulses lead them astray. She received the wanderer with simple kindness. "I feared you were too young," she said, "for this journey; I am glad, however, that it has not turned out as ill as I expected." She received him into her house, and with maternal care sought to find some permanent occupation for which he was fitted. For some time her endeavours were vain. He was pronounced to be incapable of being able even to learn Latin enough for a country curate. Her heart must have been indeed warm with natural charity, not to have been chilled by these rebukes of any vanity she might have felt in patronising the outcast. A taste which Rousseau developed for music at length afforded her some hope. She placed him with M. le Maître, music master to the cathedral choir. Here he remained for a year studying the art. M. le Maître, however, had a quarrel with a canon of the cathedral; and, to revenge himself, absconded with his case of music on the eve of the holy week, when his services were most wanted. Unable to dissuade him from this folly, madame de Warens permitted Rousseau to aid and accompany him in his flight. He did not go far: at Lyons poor Le Maître fell into an epileptic fit; and Rousseau, frightened, hastily gave him in charge to the bystanders, made his own escape, and returned to Annecy. This, he says, is his "second painful confession." It is here mentioned, as well as his first, to show—as in the more heinous one that follows—that Rousseau's real defect was a want of moral courage to meet any menacing and uncertain evil, and absence of fixed principle to enable him to conquer this defect, and to recognise the omnipotent claims of duty. He re-

1729. Ætat. 17.

turned to Annecy, and found that madame de Warens had departed for Paris. Thrown on his own resources, he felt uncertain as to the means of gaining his bread. He was asked by madame de Warens' maid-servant to accompany her to Fribourg, her native place; she also being left without explanation by her mistress. A wandering life of some years commenced with this journey. In writing this portion of Rousseau's biography, we labour under the disadvantage, that we but abridge details, which he gives with all the glow and charm of romance and the interest of reality—while, limited in space, we can scarcely do more than mark epochs;—we pass over, therefore, the history of his adventure at Lausanne, where he pretended to furnish a concert of musicians with a piece of music of his own composition, although ignorant of the first principles of the art. Still he had studied music for some time, and had a taste for it,—and this led him to endeavour to earn his livelihood by teaching it. He remained for nearly two years at Neufchâtel, exercising the calling of music master: the temptation held out by a sort of Greek swindler led him to give up his career: he engaged himself to this man as interpreter, but was rescued out of his hands by M. de Bonac, the French ambassador, who treated him with great kindness, and gave him an introduction at Paris to be tutor to a young gentleman who had just entered the army. This scheme did not succeed. Rousseau was disgusted by the treatment he met; he left his employer, and returned to Savoy on foot: he had reached Paris in a similar manner.

1733. Ætat. 21. Arriving at Chambery, he found madame de Warens returned. She presented him on the instant to the intendant-general of the province, who gave him employment as clerk, or, as he was styled, secretary, in an office instituted to make a census of the estates of the nobles of the country. And thus, he says, after five years, which had elapsed since his flight from Geneva—after many follies and many sufferings, for the first time he began to earn his livelihood in a creditable situation.

He was still a mere boy — or rather, had just arrived at that age where boyhood ceases and manhood begins. — He had led a precarious life. The kindness of madame de Warens was all in which he could put his trust; and that had failed him during the space of nearly two years. Want had frequently stared him in the face. He could gain bare necessaries only by his own exertions. Of a romantic unsteady disposition, any stable position, holding out positive remuneration and demanding regular conduct, was swiftly abandoned; while he also, through some strange conformation of mind, appeared incapable of using the genius then in embryo within him, for the acquirement of such knowledge as would have insured him an honourable position. Thus the precious years of youth wasted away imperceptibly, and all that he gained, apparently, as of account for future years, was a knowledge of music. It may be that this wandering, desultory, precarious existence, fed by romantic dreams and burning affections, was best adapted to develope his peculiar talents — but it certainly was not such as to form habits of mind conducive to happiness. It engendered a sort of bold and restless self-confidence, founded rather on that which he could do without, than on that which he could attain — it inspired mistrust or disdain for the assistance of others as being of no ultimate avail to his welfare; he acquired through it a capacity of living for the present day, without care for the coming one; and an inability to endure restraint, even when restraint was an imperious duty; — in short, a restless sense of unused liberty. Independence is assuredly the basis of true genius — but then it is that which holds fast by duty; — this last better portion was not developed in Rousseau till a later day — and then in so imperfect a manner, and tainted by so much, first of whim, and lastly of madness, that he reaped little benefit from the lessons of experience.

He continued to fulfil his duties as secretary for two years; and showed his aptitude for things beyond, by making a study at the same time of arithmetic and geo-

metry. But his steady course of life was suddenly interrupted. An illness confined him to his chamber, and during this time Rameau's treatise on harmony fell into his hands. It served still more to develope a passion for music of which he had already given many tokens. He prevailed on madame de Warens to give a weekly concert; he became absorbed in the art—neglected his office — and at length proposed to his protectress to give up his situation, that he might devote himself entirely to the study of composition. She struggled against a scheme which offered little prospect of future good, and was to be followed by the immediate sacrifice of a respectable position and habits of sober industry. Rousseau's ardour caused him to prevail; and he became music master at Chambery, that he might earn a livelihood while he prosecuted his studies. He was thus thrown among the best society of the town; and found it far more agreeable to teach well-born and agreeable young ladies, than to spend eight hours a day in a close dark office, in company with under-bred uncombed clerks. Fortunately, where the salt of intellect prevails, nothing but absolute slavery of mind to an absorbing and uninstructive pursuit can prevent a man of talent from turning the various events of life to profit. Among his pupils was a M. de Conzié —a man of some talent, but with no real taste for the art which Rousseau was to teach: conversation was therefore usually substituted for the lesson; and Rousseau, led by him to read Voltaire's works, acquired something of the tone of the literature of the day, and felt himself rapidly carried away into the very heart of philosophical discussions;—he himself began to desire to write with elegance, charmed by the brilliant style of his great contemporary.

1735. Ætat. 23.

It is impossible to dwell upon the minutia of his life for the five following years; they were important — they led him through early manhood, and during their course he developed his taste for the acquirement of knowledge—educating himself intellectually and mo-

rally, as well as he could, by the light of little else than his own natural reason.

At first, his head was perpetually full of projects for advancement. He made many little journeys to Lyons, Geneva, and Niort, for the sake of prosecuting schemes, which he believed to be fraught with advantages; but which failing each in turn, he returned penniless to his home with madame de Warens. By degrees, however, he fell into a bad state of health. Feeling an inexplicable weakness pervade his frame, he believed he had but a short time to live, and lost his desire for advancement in the languor and bodily inaction produced by disease. His protectress, for the sake of securing a friend at the court of Savoy, rented a house of a Piedmontese noble at Chambery, which no one else would take, being close and damp. In the summer, she escaped from this species of prison to a small country house, Les Charmettes, near Chambery. There, in solitude and tranquillity, Rousseau gave himself up to study. Mathematics and Latin were his principal occupations: he worked hard: there was an inaptitude to remember in him which made knowledge difficult to acquire; but he acquired the power of reflection — he learnt to distinguish his ideas — he recognised moral principles and philosophical truths — he penetrated deeply into the secret springs of human action. Man's nature was often exposed as a map before him — and he knew its various bearings and powers — although he was ill able then, as ever, to control its impulses as they existed within himself.

The confidential domestic of madame de Warens died; and Rousseau, in some sort fulfilling his avocations, discovered the ruin into which his protectress was plunged, through her love of scheming, and the ready ear she gave to every quack and swindler who sought her for the sake of plunder. It became his desire to save her; and, if that were impossible, to make such a fortune as would enable him to be of use to her in his turn.

It is not our intention to enter into the details of Rousseau's connection with this lady. To any one who loves to make a study of human nature, the "Confessions" are an invaluable book, and disclose the secret of many hearts to those who have courage to penetrate into the recesses of their own. But, to be useful, they must be read as they are, with the author's observations and minute anatomy of motive; and a mere abridgment would disgust without advantage. It is not to-day that we have learnt, that it is not true, that when a woman loses one virtue she loses all. The true distinctive virtue of woman's nature is her promptitude to self-sacrifice, and a capacity to bind up her existence in the happiness and well-being of the objects of her attachment. Experience shows us, that as far as a woman does this, and is neither worldly nor depraved, she preserves, in spite of error, the more lovely qualities of her nature. Personal fidelity is the purifier and preserver of the affections; and whoso fails in this, either man or woman, degrades human nature — the glory of which is to ally the sensations of love to the emotions of the heart and the passions of the soul. If we examine the conduct of madame de Warens by this rule, we find her wanting; and whether she be a real personage, and did and felt as Rousseau describes, or an imaginary being, we may pass judgment on her, and assert that the event proves that depravity of conduct led her to fail in fulfilling the duties which the affections impose.

Rousseau, having somewhat recovered his health, returned to his projects for worldly advancement, and his journeys that carried him hither and thither in search of it. On one occasion he visited Montpellier for the sake of consulting a physician; he returned—his hopes of renovated health gone, his resolve to dedicate himself to his benefactress strengthened. He returned, to find another in his place—his friend's heart changed—the paradise he cherished desecrated. He did not the less resolve to serve her. "Reduced," he writes, "to form a fate for myself independent of her, and not being

able even to imagine such, I sought it wholly in herself— and I did this so entirely, that I succeeded in almost forgetting myself. The ardent desire of seeing her happy absorbed all my affections. In vain did she separate her happiness from mine; I saw it in hers, in spite of her. Thus the virtues whose seed were in my soul, and which study had matured, began to germinate with my misfortunes, and waited but for the operation of adversity to bud forth." This exalted state of mind, however, could not last. Finding his rival totally unworthy of his attempts to educate him, and that he was plunging the unfortunate madame de Warens deeper in inevitable ruin, he hurried from the scene. The employment of tutor to the children of M. de Mabli, at Lyons, was offered him; he undertook it; but soon became disgusted. At a distance, the tranquil happiness of Les Charmettes recurred to his memory; he began to fancy that he was in fault — that he had but to return to find love and peace. He did return, and the illusion was dispelled for ever. For a short time he gave himself up to study, while he revolved a thousand projects for his future life. Music was still a favourite pursuit. He had invented a method of noting music which he considered more facile and perfect than the one in use. He believed that, if known, it would be generally adopted; and that, if he took it to Paris and showed it to the professors, they would at once perceive its advantages, and his fortune would be made. His imagination speedily warmed with the idea, and he hurried to execute it. "I had brought," he writes, "some money with me from Lyons; I sold my books to acquire a sum sufficient for my journey. My design was taken and executed within the space of fifteen days. In short, full of magnificent ideas— and ever the same in all times — I left Savoy with my system of music, as before I had quitted Turin with my toy fountain."

Rousseau pauses —his biographers usually pause—at this epoch, when he was about to enter on a new life,— leaving the country and solitude for the busy capital of

France. He was nine and twenty; his character was formed. The love of adventure, which had first caused his flight from Geneva, had turned into a love of scheming. While censuring madame de Warens for this turn of mind, he little felt how entirely he participated in it. His life was made up of schemes, which his ardent disposition exalted into passions. The genuine impulses of his soul were, his genius, developed in authorship; his passionate heart, which wasted its fondest impulses on one (madame d'Houtetot) who loved another. These were not schemes; but his stoicism — his hermitism (if this word be allowed)—his independence carried to an extravagant pitch, were all schemes; and succeeded, consequently, as ill as possible. With this scheming head, a heart yet full of romance, and a mind stored beyond his own knowledge with observation and sagacity, he left every old friend, every old association, and plunged, poor and unknown, into a new life, in the most civilised and most profligate city in the world.

1741. Ætat. 29. Rousseau entered Paris this time, as it appeared to him, under good auspices. He found a friendly and cordial welcome from several French ladies, to whom he had letters of introduction. His system of noting music was examined, eulogised, and neglected by the Academy; and Rameau detecting a radical defect, its inventor cast it aside; but he found employment as secretary to madame Dupin and M. Francenil; and better prospects opened themselves when he was appointed secretary to M. de Montaigu, ambasssador to Venice. Here the influence of an evil destiny was manifest. Had the ambassador been a man of honour and sense, Rousseau might have passed a happy life, fulfilling an honourable career; but M. de Montaigu was avaricious to a degree that made him sacrifice propriety as well as dignity to his saving propensities. "The character of this ambassador," says Bernardin de Saint Pierre, "is well known. I have heard from good authority several traits of his avarice. 'Three shoes,' he

1743. Ætat.

often said, 'are equivalent to two pair, because one is sooner worn out than the other;' and he therefore always had three shoes made at a time." This man, silly, insolent, and grasping, crushed the last ambition of Rousseau. He treated him with such indignity that he was forced to leave him. Plundered and ill treated, while every one at Venice at the time was eager to furnish testimonials of his excellent conduct — and his dispatches had merited high praise — he received no compensation from the court he served. The iniquitous maxim of the French government, never publicly to acknowledge the misconduct of those whom it employed, joined to the circumstance that Rousseau was not a Frenchman, sufficed to render his representations of no avail. This thoroughly, and with reason, disgusted him from seeking employment under a system where all worth was trampled on by rank and wealth.

He returned to Paris, and was kindly received by all his friends, with one exception only, of a highborn lady, who could not imagine that a *roturier* had any right to quarrel with a noble. His friends madame Dupin and M. Franceuil continued their employment; the latter subsequently endeavoured to place him advantageously as cashier in his office, he being farmer-general; but Rousseau could neither rest nor sleep while the money-chest was under his care; and falling ill in consequence, gave up his situation. M. de Franceuil was somewhat alienated by this act; he began to think that there were no means of befriending a man who shrunk from a lucrative and easy employment.

On his first arrival from Venice, Rousseau enjoyed the intimate friendship of an enlightened Spaniard, a man of noble nature and great powers of mind. They agreed to live under the same roof, and allied themselves in the closest friendship. D'Alcuna was recalled to his native country, and Rousseau felt the void. He had been accustomed to domestic society, and in addition he felt that he needed the kind attentions of a woman, and

this want led to the fatal act from which sprung so many of his misfortunes.

In his native country, or in England, Rousseau would, under the influence of public opinion, probably have married. He would not have been content in forming so solemn a tie without being satisfied with the connections of her who hereafter was to share his life; he would have desired still more to assure himself of the qualities of her heart and mind. Unfortunately his residence in Savoy and in Paris had deprived him of all primitive simplicity in his principles of moral conduct; and he had none of that fastidious taste that made him shrink from the society of the vicious. For purposes of economy he dined at a sort of table-d'hôte frequented by persons lost to all sense of decency; refinement was out of the question. He found a poor girl there, who was too modest for the depraved and brutalised men who frequented the house. Rousseau took her part, ties of kindness were formed between them, and it appearing a matter of convenience to himself, he induced her to become his mistress.

Therese le Vasseur was not an ill-conducted girl on certain points; she was always faithful, as far as is known, to her tie to Rousseau; but she was not only ignorant and illiterate, but wanting in common understanding. Rousseau boasts that she could give excellent advice on emergencies; but this common sense did not lead her to resist the influence of her mother, a low cunning woman; while Rousseau, not liking to have the burden of her destiny, future as well as present, thrown wholly on himself, felt no inclination, at the commencement of their intercourse, when alone it was possible, to separate her from association with her family, which tended to keep her vulgar-minded and artful.

Even in his Confessions, where Rousseau discloses his secret errors, he by no means appreciates the real extent of his misconduct on this occasion. He allied himself to a girl whom he despised too much to allow her at first even to share his home; he took her as a sort of

convenience, and when inconveniences arose from the connection, he was disposed to get rid of them on the easiest possible terms. Theresa was about to become a mother. According to the profligate code of French morals, this fact would dishonour her; though the illicit intercourse, if not openly acknowledged, did not. Rousseau did not like to multiply ties between himself and his mistress and her family: he was needy: he had heard young men of rank and fortune allude vauntingly to the recourse they had had on such occasions to the Foundling Hospital. He followed their criminal example.

He at first acted, he says, without serious examination of the morality of his conduct; but when he commenced author, he gave attentive consideration to the point, and satisfied himself that he did right, and continued his course of conduct. Five of his children were thus sent to a receptacle where few survive; and those who do go through life are brutified by their situation, or depressed by the burden, ever weighing at the heart, that they have not inherited the commonest right of humanity, a parent's care.

It is insulting the reader to dwell on the flagrancy of this act. But it is a lesson that ought to teach us humility. That a man as full of genius and aspiration after virtue as Rousseau, should have failed in the plainest dictates of nature and conscience, through the force of example and circumstances, shows us how little we can rely on our own judgment. It shows too, that a father is not to be trusted for natural instincts towards his offspring; for the mother wept, and it needed the control of her own mother, and strong necessity, to induce the weak-minded and misguided girl to consent to part with her offspring.

We say little of Rousseau's vain excuses as to the probable destiny of his children. They were better, he says, brought up by the public, than rendered rogues by madame le Vasseur, or led into evil courses as dependants on madame d'Epinay and the maréchale de Luxem-

bourg. This futile reasoning does not need elaborate refutation. Rousseau talks of public care, as if that were, in such a place as a Parisian foundling hospital, aught else but public desertion. The poor children in all probability died in their infancy.

Rousseau was indeed short-sighted. Brought up in virtue and honour, as a man of his talents ought to have brought up his offspring,—or genius were a vainer gift even than it is,—these children might have clustered round him in his days of desolation, have cheered his house with smiles, and been a help and support in his age. He would not have felt friendless, nor been driven to suicide by the sense of abandonment and treachery. He indeed sowed the wind, and reaped the whirlwind. France was on the eve of a sanguinary revolution. The social state of things was about wholly to change. Who knows of what use Rousseau's sons might have been to check barbarous outrages, to teach justice, or display fortitude? Such ideas are vain, but will present themselves. Our first duty is to render those to whom we give birth, wise, virtuous, and happy, as far as in us lies. Rousseau failed in this,—can we wonder that his after course was replete with sorrow? The distortion of intellect that blinded him to the first duties of life, we are inclined to believe to be allied to that vein of insanity, that made him an example among men for self-inflicted sufferings. We now dismiss this subject. It was necessary to bring it so far forward as to show the evil effects of so bad a cause; it is too painful to dwell further upon.

By degrees Rousseau overcame his dislike to its being known to his friends that he had formed this sort of connection with Theresa, and he made common household with her. This species of intercourse was looked upon in a different light in France than in England. She was regarded as Rousseau's housekeeper, and respected as such; and no one thought that they had a right to scrutinise their real relations, or to censure them. This had been praiseworthy as a proceeding founded on

tolerant and charitable principles; but when we find that this kindly-seeming society was a Moloch, whom to pacify, little children were ruthlessly sacrificed, the whole system takes a revolting and criminal aspect from which we turn with loathing.

However, to go back to narrative. Rousseau instituted Theresa his housekeeper, assisted in the maintenance of her relatives, and found, in the convenience and attention which these domestic arrangements brought with them, a great alleviation to his physical sufferings. This same year was memorable on another and important score. Among his Parisian friends, there was none to whom he was more attached than Diderot, a man of an amiable disposition, and possessed of greater abilities in the eyes of those who personally knew him, than he has developed in his writings. Some people in power were displeased at certain personal allusions in his "Letter on the Blind." According to the nefarious system of the old regime, the result was, a *lettre de cachet*, and his being imprisoned in the keep of the castle of Vincennes. Rousseau was penetrated by indignation and anguish. He fancied that his friend would never be liberated; he figured to himself all that a man of ardent and yet feeble temperament would suffer in solitary confinement. He wrote to implore madame de Pompadour to exert her influence, either to procure his liberation, or to admit of him, Rousseau, being shut up with him. On all occasions he was energetic in representing the unmerited sufferings to which his friend was exposed. After a period, the confinement of Diderot was mitigated. The castle and park of Vincennes, on parole, were given him for a prison, with liberty to see his friends. Rousseau hastened to avail himself of this permission, and frequently walked to Vincennes to pass the afternoons in relieving the solitude of his friend. The way was long, the summer sultry, his pace slow. He read as he walked along; and once took with him the "Mercure de France" to beguile the way; as he looked it over, he fell upon the question proposed by the Academy

1749. Ætat. 37.

of Dijon, as the subject for the prize of the following year —"Whether the progress of the arts and sciences had tended to corrupt or purify the manners of men." The words touched a chord that revealed a power, latent in his heart, undreamt of before. The scroll of society unrolled itself before him, such as he found it, blotted and tainted, in the city of the earth that boasted to be the most advanced in the cultivation of the arts and sciences. And beside it he placed a picture of pristine innocence, — of man enjoying the full development of his physical powers; living for the day as it rose, untouched by care, unbewildered by intellectual speculations, — by vanity, emulation, or pride; — man liberated from the control of opinion and the tyranny of his own unreasonable desires. Words descriptive of such a state poured into his mind; expressions of burning eloquence seemed to cluster on his lips, and to demand a voice. Before he could transfer his thoughts to paper, much was lost; but enough remained to gain for him the reputation of being one of the most eloquent authors that ever lived.*

The eloquence with which he represented the evils of civilisation, and the blessings of a state of nature, as he called it, fascinated every reader. The freshness and energy of his style charmed; the heart he put into his arguments served instead of reason, and convinced. The opponents of his system were sufficiently in the wrong, to make him appear absolutely in the right. Yet, in point of fact, nothing can be more unnatural than his natural man. The most characteristic part of man's nature is his affections. The protection he affords to

* He describes this moment of spontaneous inspiration in one of his letters to M. de Malesherbes, and in his Confessions, with enthusiastic eloquence. Diderot denied the truth of the statement, saying, that in fact Rousseau had shown him the question in the newspaper, in the park of Vincennes, and said, that he meant to write in favour of the arts and sciences; but, on the representation of Diderot, he found that finer things might be said on the other side, and consequently adopted it. We doubt all this. Our own experience has shown us the great mistakes people can fall into, when they pretend to recount the thoughts and actions of others. Rousseau would never have written this detail to M. de Malesherbes, had he not believed it to be true; and we think that he is more likely to have known the truth than Diderot.

woman — the cares required by children ; yet Rousseau describes his natural man as satisfying his desires by chance, — leaving the woman on the instant ; while she, on her side, goes through child-bearing, child-birth, and child-nurture alone. Much may be granted to the strength that human beings enjoy in savage life ; much to the little needed by the inhabitants of those happy isles where food grows beneath their feet ; but, in all, man has ever been found (except in one or two cases, where the human animal descends below brutes,) the protector of women, and the source of his children's subsistence ; and among all societies, however barbarously constituted, the gentler and nobler individuals among them have loved their wives and their offspring with constant and self-sacrificing passion. Let us advance civilisation to its highest pitch, or retrograde to its origin, — and let both bring freedom from political and social slavery ; but in all let us hold fast by the affections : the cultivation of these ought to be the scope of every teacher of morality, every well-wisher to the improvement of the human race. Poor Rousseau, who had thrust his offspring from parental care to the niggard benevolence of a public charity, found some balm to the remorse that now and then stung him, by rejecting the affections out of his scheme of the state of natural man.

His work had a sudden and prodigious success ; and as the ideas that inspired it disclosed a new and intellectual world to him, so did the favour of the public open a new scene of life. It was soon after writing this essay, that M. de Franceuil offered him the place of cashier. The uneasiness he felt, and other circumstances, combined to give him a fit of illness. During the delirium of fever, and during the reveries of convalescence, he formed a plan for securing his independence. He believed that he had but a few years to live ; and he saw no prudence in working for a fortune he could never enjoy. He resolved therefore to renounce his place of cashier, to give up that of secretary to madame Dupin, and to gain his subsistence by copying music. In Paris,

men of letters, frequenting the highest society, often live in the most frugal manner, and need only the wherewithal to buy their daily bread. Rousseau determined to reduce himself to this situation, to limit his expenses to bare necessities, and to guard the independence he coveted, by decreasing his wants. His friends heard of his resolution with incredulity, surprise, and subsequent disapprobation. The family of Therese le Vasseur were dependent on him, and he thus condemned them also to indigence. Rousseau was not to be moved. His new reputation as an author caused him to be sought by the most chosen societies of Paris; his idea of adapting his manners and life to his theories gave piquancé to his appearance and society. "I avow," he says, in his second letter to M. de Malesherbes, "that the name I acquired by my writings greatly facilitated the plan I adopted. It was necessary that I should be thought a good author, to become with impunity a bad copyist, and to find work notwithstanding; without the first title, I might have been disregarded in the other; and though I can easily brave ridicule, I should have supported contempt with difficulty." As it was, all he did seemed to increase his reputation. He was considered eccentric, — but he was sought as a man of genius.

1750. Ætat. 38. Another circumstance concurred to raise him to the pinacle of fashion. This was the success of the "Divin du Village." He had before composed an opera; but the envy of Rameau had robbed him of the fame: the "Divin du Village" was all his own. It was represented at Versailles before the king and assembled court, and received with enthusiasm. It became the topic of conversation in Paris; he was invited to be presented to Louis XV.; and it was supposed that a pension would be conferred on him. Independence, pride, false shame, all concurred to make him renounce the intended honour and emolument: his friends reproved him severely, but he was not to be shaken. Still he made a few hundred louis by the piece, and was thus,

with his frugal habits, placed above want for several years to come.

The academy of Dijon proposing another question—the Origin of Inequality among Men. Rousseau seized the opportunity of further developing his opinions, and of asserting still more boldly the superiority of what he termed the natural man over the nurslings of civilisation.

He soon after visited his native town. He dwells slightly on the motives of this journey: a wish to revisit the scenes which he had quitted a penniless adventurer, and to enter Geneva attended by the celebrity he had already gained, were no doubt principal motives. Theresa and his friend Gauffecourt accompanied him. He saw madame de Warens sunk in a low abyss of poverty; he implored her to leave Savoy, and to take up her abode with him in Paris; she refused, and he left her, never to see her more. While at Geneva he abjured the Roman catholic religion, and entered again the protestant church. The pedantic clergy of Geneva were very desirous that he should make a speech on the occasion; Rousseau would not have been sorry to comply, but he broke down at the outset. He was treated with great distinction by the most distinguished of his fellow citizens, and the design soon suggested itself of his establishing himself entirely among them; a place of librarian, worth about 50*l.* a year, was offered him, to secure the respectability of his situation. 1754. Ætat. 42.

After some time spent in revisiting scenes dear through youthful association, and of entrancing beauty in themselves, he returned to Paris; and here he was assailed by many doubts as to his plans for the future. The idea of residing an honoured and distinguished citizen in his native town, so flattering at first, began to lose its charm. In his heart he doubtless felt that the sort of inquisitorial and pedantic tone that reigned in Geneva, clothed in the garb of virtue and reason, was more likely to shackle the free expression of his genius than the versatile society of Paris. Voltaire also had just taken up his residence at les Delices. Without

any taint of envy, Rousseau might naturally shrink from living under his shadow. Older than him, rich, of established reputation, arrogant beneath all his playfulness, and so mischievously meddling, that even the king of Prussia found him a troublesome inmate, a very little knowledge of the world would have told Rousseau that they could only agree, when in vicinity, through continual deference on his part; and the views they took of the social system were so different, and both were by disposition so eager to disseminate their respective opinions, that deference was out of the question, and open hostilities must have been the consequence.

Still Rousseau doubted, and was disturbed. Madame d'Epinay relates the nature of his deliberations, which betray great foresight and prudence. "Rousseau is perplexed," she says; "nor am I less, with regard to the advice that he asks of me. He has received letters pressing him warmly to return and live in his native country. 'What ought I to do?' he said, 'I neither can nor will reside in Paris, I am too miserable. I should be glad to visit and to pass several months in my republic; but the propositions made me are of a nature to fix me there; and if I accept them, I must remain. I have some acquaintance, but no friends. These people scarcely know me, and they write to me as a brother; this I am aware is the result of the republican spirit, but I distrust such warm friends. On the other hand, my heart warms at the idea, that my country invites me; but how quit Grimm, Diderot, and yourself?'"

Madame d'Epinay was, when left to herself, a woman of generous impulses and an affectionate heart. She conceived a method of cutting the gordian knot, and acted on it at once. At the entrance of the forest of Montmorenci, there was a small house belonging to M. d'Epinay, called the Hermitage. M. d'Epinay was adding a new wing to the château; his wife persuaded him to allow some of the workmen to enlarge and fit up this house: all was executed with zealous speed. She

then offered Rousseau the dwelling with all the grace a woman puts into an obligation she confers; she was desirous, at the same time, of adding to his income; but he at once refused the latter proposition, while he accepted the first. He could not help being deeply touched by so kind and tender a mark of affection. The active attention she paid to the details of his removal, when all was arranged, taking him and his two gouvernantes in her carriage, and herself giving them possession, were marks of real attachment and sympathy.

Rousseau found the spot exactly calculated to please him: however much the society of Paris might be necessary at times to entertain, he had been bred in the country; his young and happy days had been passed there, and he could not view a secluded abode in the midst of forest glades, and the advance of spring, as it clothed the landscape with verdure, without a burst of transport. The house was small, but neat and comfortable; and that all was the gift of friendship rendered it inestimable in his eyes. 1756. Ætat. 44.

It is difficult not to dwell, as he has done, on the delight he experienced during the commencement of his abode at the Hermitage. At first he could only enjoy the woodland walks; the budding of the trees; the balmy winds of opening spring; the aspect of nature. He deliberated as to his occupations; he arranged his papers. He still considered copying music as the calling by which he was to gain his bread; but he revolved many literary projects. The editing the manuscripts of the Abbé de Saint Pierre; an original work he named "Les Institutions Politiques;" a metaphysical discussion on the effects of external circumstances on the human mind; and, to crown all, a system of education, on which he had been requested to occupy himself, by a lady to whose sons he had at one time acted as tutor; — such were his schemes — the subject of his meditations during his walks. These meditations were, however, soon merged into reveries and day-dreams, that absorbed his heart

and soul. The long summer days passed beneath the shades of the forest, recalled the wanderings of his youth, and the passions that had warmed his young heart. — A settled life with Theresa ; the cares and discontents he had endured in Paris, his literary occupations and theories, engrossing his thoughts, had banished love. Now, in his solitary rambles, as his memory reverted to the illusions of bygone years, his imagination fired, his heart swelled, his being became absorbed. No real object presenting itself, he created chimerical beings, on whom he exhausted the most passionate sentiments, the most brilliant imaginations. His day-dreams became extatic: he was drunk with an abstract love for one who lived only as he painted her, in the form most delightful to his thoughts: he charmed himself by figuring various situations — by addressing letters to her — by fancying those he received in return. He checked himself in his vague reveries, and gave a form and place, a name and a habitation to his creations: the lover and beloved, and the friend dear to both, were imaged and placed in a spot carefully selected as beautiful in itself, and associated with his fondest recollections. Julie, Claire, and Saint Preux, lived and loved at Vevay, beside his native lake, in the midst of the most majestic and lovely scenes that exist on earth.

The winter was passed tranquilly ; he occupied himself by completing and copying the first two parts of the "Nouvelle Heloise." When spring returned he again delivered himself up to his entrancing reveries, and wandered in the woods, as he composed the latter parts of his work. In these there reigns a sort of paradisaical peace —a voluptuous yet innocent transport of acknowledged bliss, that charms the reader, as it inspired the writer. That to be thus engrossed by ideas of passionate love, however we may imagine that we can restrain them within proper bounds, leads at last to the errors of passion, cannot be doubted. Rousseau instinctively felt this truth when he made death the catastrophe of his novel; not so much to mar the scene, as to prevent sin and re-

morse from defacing it still more; he felt it in his own person, when his unguarded and softened heart was suddenly possessed by a passion the most vehement and unfortunate that ever caused a frail human being to thrill and mourn.

The countess d'Houdetot was the sister of M. d'Epinay, and was married to a young noble, who had been given her as a husband in her youth, in the way marriages were made in France, neither knowing nor caring for the other. He was an insignificant person, very fond of money, and totally neglectful of his wife. The usual course in such marriages was, that the wife should have a lover, and if the husband were content to shut his eyes, and she continued constant to one person, she was looked on as living respectably. Madame d'Houdetot was not even pretty; but she had a look of youth, preserved by the ingenuousness of her mind and the kindness of her heart. Every one loved her. Gay, gentle, full of tenderness, and admirably true and sincere; she added to these qualities a giddiness of disposition — a childish but bewitching frankness — a wit that never hurt, but always charmed, as springing from the natural gladness of an innocent heart; and, protected by these genuine virtues, she escaped the contamination of Parisian society. Her lover, M. de Saint Lambert, was a man distinguished for his talents, moving in the highest society, a gallant soldier, an admired poet, a handsome man; his attachment, according to the code of morals of the society to which they belonged, reflected honour on its object.

She came several times, at the desire of Saint Lambert, to visit Rousseau at the Hermitage. He had desired her to go, believing that the ties of friendship established between the three would be of mutual benefit; and Rousseau being aware of their attachment, the openness of heart that reigned in the intercourse was another attraction. She spoke of her lover with enthusiasm: Rousseau listened, and before he was aware, felt for her all that she expressed for another. When, after her departure, he turned his thoughts to Julie, hitherto the

idol of his imagination, he found her image displaced by that of madame d'Houdetot, and with a pang recognised the new power that possessed him.

Sophist, as on many occasions Rousseau undoubtedly was, he reasoned on his feelings till the very causes that ought to have made him resolve to crush the nascent passion, were changed by him into motives for fostering it. He had enounced a severe code of morality, and called the permitted liaisons of Parisian society by the harsh name of adultery; and it would have been base indeed to have been tempted into forming such himself. There was no danger of this. Madame d'Houdetot loved another, superior to himself in all qualities that attract, with warmth and truth. He duped himself, therefore, by the vain sophism, that he only injured himself by nourishing an unreturned passion.

Could he have confined it to his own heart, the injury would have been great enough; disturbing his peace, wrecking the little of proud consolatory thoughts which he preserved. But from the first he avowed his love to its object, and continued to pour the fervent expressions it inspired into her ear; secure in the mistaken notion, that as he did not seek to win her, but only to unburden his heart, the indulgence was innocent. He says that he should blame madame d'Houdetot for listening, had he been young and good-looking: still he was not so very old; perhaps suffering added years to his appearance; but at all events the lady acted with great imprudence. Her artless noble character lifts her far above unworthy suspicion; but she was thoughtless and inexperienced; the dupe of mistaken compassion. She allowed Rousseau to visit her frequently; to write to her; to pour out the declarations of his love; never feeling inclined to participate in his sentiments, she yet wished to preserve his friendship and to enjoy his society. For four months they were continually together. He walked over to her house at Eaubonne—they met halfway—they rambled together in the neighbouring country. Such unguarded conduct excited remark. Madame

d'Epinay, to say the least, was exceedingly annoyed that her sister-in-law should thus expose herself to calumny. We have two accounts of these unfortunate events, one by Rousseau, the other from her pen. She passes rather slightly over them, but expresses even disgust; she was aware, she says, of her sister's innocence, but pained by her imprudent conduct. Theresa became violently jealous; and while she tried to pacify her, she blamed those who so needlessly excited her jealousy. Rousseau, on the contrary, accuses her of the utmost baseness; of fostering remark; of writing to Saint Lambert a garbled and false statement of facts; of exciting Theresa's jealousy, and even instigating her to steal any letters she might find, and betray them to her. There is, probably, exaggeration in this; at the same time it is plain that the intercourse between Rousseau and madame d'Houdetot was the chief topic of conversation at the château of her sister-in-law; that they were greatly blamed; and it is certain that Saint Lambert received an anonymous letter, informing him of what was going on. Probably Therese or her mother wrote it; we can hardly suspect madame d'Epinay of so base and vulgar a proceeding. It is remarkable that these accounts not only differ materially in circumstances, but that the notes of madame d'Epinay, as given by her, are written in quite another tone from those quoted in the Confessions. As whenever Rousseau's copies have been collated with the originals, they have been found faithful, we suspect the lady of falsifying hers. In fact, while Rousseau gains our confidence, even while we perceive that he acted a highly blameable part, there is a studied, though apparently negligent, glozing of facts in madame d'Epinay's which excites suspicion.

Saint Lambert did not suspect madame d'Houdetot; but he thought that Rousseau was highly blameable for declaring love for her; and that she was very unwise in listening to him. He interfered, though with kindness and consideration for his unhappy rival; the inter-

course was broken off. Rousseau, with a heart worn by passion, and bursting with the struggles that tormented it, was thrown back on himself, to find his friends alienated, his home disquieted, and sympathy nowhere.

Many other circumstances contributed to his unhappiness; circumstances which would scarcely enter into the history of any other man as eminent as Rousseau; apparently trifling, but rendered important through his sensitive and umbrageous disposition. He had two intimate male friends: Diderot, whom he had known many years, and to whom he was sincerely attached; and Grimm. Diderot was a singular man, and enjoyed during life more reputation than has afterwards fallen to his lot. He had great talents, joined to a sensibility, which was real in him, but which produced a style in France, that may be termed the ejaculatory, the most affected and tiresome in the world. His opinions became feelings; these feelings engrossed him; he was in a perpetual state of exaltation and enthusiasm about trifles. As an instance, we are told, that at one time he could not sleep at nights, because Virgil had not praised Lucretius, till at length he found a verse in the Georgics—

"Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas;"

and interpreting it into an encomium on the great metaphysical poet of antiquity, he regained his tranquillity. He had a tender heart, but though he possessed some genius, he had not understanding enough to serve as an equilibrium. Rousseau was in very bad hands as regarded the *gouverneuses*, as he called them. The mother of Theresa was a grasping, artful, gossiping, selfish old woman. Rousseau was poor; she complained to his friends, and Diderot and Grimm thought it right to make her a small allowance. They did this unknown to their friend, and were certainly wrong; for there is nothing more improper than to interfere secretly with the household of others. Giving this money, they thought they had a right to interfere further. The

le Vasseurs, mother and daughter, had no desire to pass the winter, away from their Parisian acquaintance, in the forest of Montmorenci. They complained bitterly, and Diderot wrote to remonstrate with Rousseau. To read his letter, you would imagine that his friend thought of wintering at the North Pole ; his earnestness on stilts on such a petty occasion ought to have excited a smile; it gave birth to a storm in the breast of the sensitive philosopher —this was at last appeased—but still the thunder growled. The unfortunate passion of Rousseau for madame d'Houdetot at first made him solitary and abstracted— then miserable. Every demonstration of suffering was interpreted as springing from melancholy engendered by solitude.

His other friend, Grimm, was German, who had appeared in Paris in an obscure situation, as tutor to the children of the count de Schomberg. Rousseau was one of his first acquaintance ; their common love of music brought them together. Grimm was a man of ambition as far as society went. His personal affectations did not stop at brushing his nails, — a mark of effeminacy indignantly related by Rousseau, — but by painting his cheeks white and red, which gained for him the nickname of Tyran le Blanc. Rousseau introduced him to madame d'Epinay. This lady was suffering bitterly from the infidelity of her lover Franceuil; — she permitted herself to be consoled by Grimm; who, while he became *l'ami de maison,* seems to have determined that he should be single in that character. He did all he could to undermine Rousseau with madame d'Epinay, inducing her to resent his faults, his sensitiveness, his imperious calls for sympathy and service, which she had hitherto regarded with affectionate indulgence. She was slow to submit to the law, and placed him in the Hermitage against Grimm's will; — to eject him from this abode was the aim of his false friend.

Of course, there are a thousand contradictions in the various accounts given of these quarrels; and we seek the truth rather from the letters written at the time, if

these be not falsified. Grimm accused Rousseau of being in love with madame d'Epinay : he denies this ; and at least, when he loved madame d'Houdetot, he no longer cared for her sister-in-law. Was she piqued by his coldness, as Rousseau insinuates; or was it merely that she yielded more and more to Grimm's representations that he was a dangerous person? The final cause of her quarrel, as she relates, was his speaking of her detractingly to Diderot, who refused to be acquainted with her. There seems some foundation for this accusation. She accuses him of speaking falsely; and there are certainly traces of his having spoken unreservedly. This was inexcusable, admitted as he was familiarly, and covered with benefits and kindness;—especially to one to whom she was a stranger. Grimm pushed things to extremities: he kept madame d'Epinay firm in her resentment; he embittered Diderot's feelings. The latter acted with his usual exaggerated and absurd sentimentality. Madame d'Epinay was very ill, and resolved on going to Geneva to consult the famous Tronchin. Diderot wrote a violent letter to Rousseau, insisting on his accompanying her, and saying, that, if his health did not allow him to bear the motion of a carriage, he ought to take his staff and follow her on foot. There is no trace that madame d'Epinay wished him to accompany her ; on the contrary, she was doing all she could to throw him off. Rousseau felt himself outraged by this letter—he fell into a transport of rage—he complained to every body, and took the resolution of quitting the Hermitage. When it came to the point, winter setting in, he found this inconvenient; and wrote to madame d'Epinay, then at Geneva, to mention his intention of staying till spring. In her answer, she very decidedly tells him that he ought not to delay his departure so long. Why this abrupt and rude dismissal? Did it spring from Grimm's advice ; or did she really feel resentment arising from the knowledge that he had either traduced her, or revealed her secrets to Diderot? On careful examination, we own, we incline to the latter opinion, and cannot exculpate Rousseau.

What a pitiful and wretched picture of society does all this present! People of refinement, of education, and genius, — Rousseau, a man so richly gifted with talent — Diderot, enthusiastic on the subject of every social duty — Grimm, a man of sense — madame d'Epinay, a woman of talent, whose disposition was injured by the state and opinions of society, but who was naturally generous, confiding, and friendly, — yet each and all acting with intolerance and bitterness. The passions were the sources of these dissensions, — Rousseau's for madame d'Houdetot — Grimm's for madame d'Epinay; — but why should not these feelings have inspired toleration and kindness? They were fostered unfortunately by temper and vanity. Each had microscopic eyes for the faults of the other — neither could perceive his own. Had they at once dismissed their mutual cavillings, reproaches, and explanations, and gone their own way in silence and toleration, they might have been unhappy, — for such must be the result of illicit love, — but they had not presented to all the world, and to posterity, so humbling a proof of the worthlessness of talent in directing the common concerns of life.

Rousseau, of course, at once quitted the Hermitage. He had a horror of entering Paris: he was greatly embarrassed as to where to go, when M. Mathas, procureur-fiscal to the prince of Condé, hearing of his uncomfortable situation, offered him a small house in his garden of Mont Louis, at Montmorenci: he accepted it at once, and removed thither. But his soul was still in tumults; still passion convulsed his heart, which would not be at peace. He desired to establish a friendship between himself, St. Lambert, and madame d'Houdetot; but they drew back — from the alleged motive that "Rousseau's attachment was the talk of Paris, and that therefore she could not have any intercourse with him." It was likely enough that the old woman, le Vasseur, or twenty others, might have been the cause of this gossip; but Rousseau chose to fix the blame on Diderot, and to quarrel with him outright. Strange that these sensitive

men should have so little real affection in their nature that, for the sake of personal offences, real or imagined, they could at once throw off those whom they had loved, as they pretended, so well and so long; showing how much more deeply rooted and engrossing was *self*, than the interests and intercourse of their friends. A few years after, Diderot sought to be reconciled to his former friend; he engaged a mutual acquaintance to mediate between them. Rousseau declined his advances. He replied:—"I do not see what M. Diderot, after seven years' silence, all at once demands of me. I ask nothing of him—I have no disavowal to make. I am far from wishing him ill—and am yet further from doing or saying aught to injure him. I know how to respect the ties of an even extinguished friendship to the end; but I never renew it—that is my inviolable maxim." Rousseau was in exile and misfortune when Diderot made this advance, which was honourable to him; he was doubtless piqued by the refusal; but we cannot excuse him when, many years afterwards, after the death of his friend, he attacked him in one of his works. It would have been better to forget. And gladly would we, in spite of the publicity given, have passed over these details—but that they formed an intrinsic portion of the picture of Rousseau's life; and were the cause why, in after times, he became suspicious even to madness—miserable even to death.

1758. Ætat. 46. With the new year, Rousseau, quitting the Hermitage, began a new life; as much as an entire casting away of old friends, and seeking fresh ones, can change the tenor of existence. But Rousseau was ever the same. His passions, masked even to himself by their intensity, ruled his destiny; and it was a miserable one. The semblance of tranquillity, however, awaited him at first; and he gave himself to study and authorship uninterruptedly. The "Encyclopædia" undertaken by d'Alembert and Diderot engaged the attention of the literary world: it was made the vehicle of their opinions, and the engine for propagating them. Voltaire was residing at the Délices. He was disgusted by the

pedantic, austere, puritanic tone of society at Geneva: he considered the drama as an admirable means of enlightening and refining a people; and, in concert with him, D'Alembert, in his article on "Geneva," wrote in favour of the establishment of a theatre in that city, where hitherto it had been forbidden. Rousseau, in his dreams of primitive innocence, considered this as an innovation on the simple manners of his country-people; and he took up his pen in opposition. He wrote with fervour and eloquence: he detailed the miseries resulting from a sophisticated state of society; and argued that the drama, by treating concerning, nourished the passions, and weakened the principles of morality. In the state in which society was in Paris, he had many arguments in his favour; and he might well consider the introduction of libertinism and luxury as pernicious, contrasted even with the narrow, bigoted spirit reigning at Geneva. The eloquence of his letter gave it vogue. In a note appended, he announced his rupture with Diderot, — accusing him at the same time of betraying him. This was fairly regarded as an unwarrantable attack, though he imagined it to be an act of heroism. It was an error, to make the public a confidant in their quarrel; and the doing so arose from the belief that all the world was occupied with him: but it was worse publicly to accuse a former friend.

Rousseau does his best, in the "Confessions," to show how contented and happy he was in his new abode — the number of friends he still retained — and his delight at being still at a distance from Paris. He, with proper pride, boasts of his contempt for party spirit, and the formation of cabals in literature, in which Paris was rife. Nothing debases literary men more than owning dependence, for praise or blame, on aught but the public at large.

Not far from his abode of Mont Louis was the château of Montmorenci, where the marshal duke de Luxembourg, with his family, usually passed the summer. On their first visit after his arrival, they sent courteous

messages and invitations; but Rousseau, with proper pride, shunned advances, the nature of which he did not fully comprehend. This occasioned further demonstrations. The duke visited him—he became an habitual guest at the château—rooms were furnished for him in a sort of pleasure-house, or smaller château, in the grounds—and he was treated by the whole family with all that cordial and winning grace peculiar to French persons of rank in those days. He read the "Nouvelle Heloïse" and "Emile" to the duchess, who paid him the most flattering attentions. Both she and her husband displayed warm interest in his fortunes; and the noble, amiable character of the marshal was a pledge that such would prove neither treacherous nor evanescent. They were serviceable, without impertinent interference —kind, without pretension.

This may be considered a happy period in Rousseau's life. The works on which his fame is chiefly founded were finished or composed during these years. The "Nouvelle Heloïse" was published at the end of 1760. With all its errors, this novel is full of noble sentiments and elevated morality—of true and admirable views of life—and an eloquence burning and absorbing. Its success was unparalleled. Parisian society, engrossed by intrigues and follies, yet felt at its core that passion was the root even of these — depraved and distorted as passion was by their social laws and opinions; and, thus brought back to its natural expression, they were carried away by enthusiastic admiration. The women in particular, who are always the losers in a system of heartless gallantry,—since they seldom, if ever, cultivate a love of pleasure destitute of sentiment—as is the case with a number of men,—were charmed by a book which increased their influence by exalting love. Another interest was excited by the notion generally spread, that the book contained the history of the author's early life. Rousseau was identified with St. Preux, and gained by the idea. This work was followed by the "Emile," —a book that deserves higher praise. That he adopted

certain views from Locke and others, who had previously written on education, does not in the least deteriorate from its merit; that, as a system, it is full of faults and impracticability takes little from its utility. He shows the true end of education; and he first explained how children ought to be treated like younger men, not as slaves or automata. His success in casting an odium on the habit of putting infants out to nurse—his admirable aphorism, that children ought to be rendered happy, since childhood is all of life they may ever know—his exhortations to prepare the pupil to be a man in the first place, instead of considering him as a noble or gentleman in embryo—are among the most admirable of his principles. Others may regard the work disparagingly; but every parent who in any degree superintends the education of his offspring—every mother who watches over the health and welfare of her babes—will readily acknowledge the deepest obligations to the author of "Emile."

It fills the soul with bitterness to think that this admirable work, whence generations of men derive wisdom and happiness, was the origin of violent persecution against the author; and, by expelling him from his home, and exposing him bare to the assaults of his enemies, drove him into a state of mind allied to madness, and devoted him to poverty and sorrow to the end of his life.

The printing and publishing of the work had been greatly assisted, not only by the duke and duchess de Luxembourg, but by M. de Malesherbes, a man of known probity and kindness of disposition. Rousseau had a quality, belonging to the warm of heart, and unknown to the cold and dull,—that of desiring to confide in, and to be fully known to, those whom he respected and loved. The benevolent attentions of M. de Malesherbes, even to the whims and groundless suspicions of a man who, from his state of health, believed himself to be dying, and feared to leave his unpublished works in the hands of enemies, evinced that warmth and truth of sympathy which is the golden treasure of human

nature, wherever it be found. Won by his benevolence, Rousseau addressed four letters to him, explaining and describing his opinions, motives, and conduct. These letters are, as it were, an introduction to the "Confessions." They are written with the same persuasive eloquence, and passionate love for the good and beautiful, that reigns in the last parts of the "Nouvelle Heloïse," and forms their charm.

He had been ill during the publication of the "Emile," and rendered vehemently anxious by delays of the press. At length the book appeared;—but it bore a stamp to intimidate his admirers and silence their public applause; and it was therefore received more silently than any other of his works. The Confession of the Vicar of Savoy is a declaration of pure deism; and, in particular, is levelled against various pernicious errors of catholicism. The great foundation stone of papacy is auricular confession, which enables the clergy to put all sins against the ordinances of the church in the first class; and to look on falsehood, treachery, and intolerance, as virtues, when exercised for its sake. The Confession allies religion and morals—makes the Gospel a rule of conduct; and, though it doubts the mysteries of the Christian faith, it speaks of them with reverence, but in a protestant spirit, totally at variance with catholicism. This portion of his book excited remark, and exposed the author to the persecutions of the French priesthood.

But Rousseau felt perfectly secure. There was nothing said in the Confession of the Vicar of Savoy that had not appeared before in the last part of the "Nouvelle Heloïse." He had himself, notwithstanding these considerations, been exceedingly averse to publishing his work in France: the method then, with any book bringing forward forbidden opinions, being to publish it at Brussels, which sheltered the author from the French laws. But the duchess of Luxembourg and M. de Malesherbes persuaded him to let them undertake an edition in France; and it was brought out at their

instigation, against his own conviction: they, therefore, were responsible for his seeurity; and he did not entertain the slightest doubt but that they would provide against his incurring any evil consequences.

It was as the shock of an earthquake, therefore, when, a few days after the publication of the "Emile," he was disturbed in the middle of the night by a message from the duchess of Luxembourg, saying that a decree of arrest of his person would be executed on the following morning, at seven o'clock, if he remained, but that, if he fled, he would not be pursued; and begging him to come to her immediately. It was greatly to the interest of the duchess to get Rousseau away, that the whole affair might be hushed up; since any examinations would betray her connivance in the publication. Rousseau was aware of this. He saw the duchess agitated;—he felt that, however much he might wish to shield her during his examination, any mistake on his part might compromise her; and he knew his habitual want of presence of mind. He consented at once to fly—he was not allowed to deliberate; the morning was given to preparations and adieus; at four o'clock in the afternoon he departed. His friends were safe—he alone the sufferer. June 15. 1762. Ætat. 50.

His first idea was to establish himself in his native town; but this plan was speedily deranged. Nine days after the decree of the parliament of Paris, the council of Geneva, instigated by the French government, sentenced the "Emile" to be burnt, and its author to be imprisoned if he entered their territory. Rousseau might well feel disdain and indignation for the folly and intolerance of his country-people; nor was it in human nature for his heart not to ferment with resentment and scorn at the universal attack levelled against him from all sects, all parties, all countries, on account of a book whose chief pretension was to bear the stamp of impartial truth, and to become (and he succeeded in his attempt) highly beneficial to the human race. Its fault is that it is anti-christian; but the most devout follower of our Saviour, if charitable, must be impressed by the sincerity of the

author, and respect the love of truth that dictated his declarations.

Rousseau had arrived at Iverdun, in the canton of Berne. Exiled from Geneva, he resolved to remain there. He had friends; and a house was offered him, which he had accepted — when he heard that the council of Berne had sent an order desiring him to quit their state. Thus persecuted, he had but one resource. Neufchâtel and its territory belongs to the kingdom of Prussia: he believed that he should find toleration at the hands of Frederic the Great.

He found far more in the governor of Neufchâtel — marshal lord Keith, a man eminent for his virtue. Marshal Keith had entertained many false notions with regard to Rousseau; but he was filled with sentiments of benevolence towards him; and the king of Prussia, influenced by him, was desirous of rendering his residence in his states agreeable. Rousseau refused the offers of a house, and of supplies of wood, corn, wine, &c., which were offered him in lieu of money, as likely to be more readily accepted; indeed, in his "Confessions," he speaks with contempt of these offers, as coming from Frederic: but he acquired the friendship — the affection — of the amiable and benevolent lord Keith; and found in it, while it was spared to him, the consolation of his life.

He took up his residence in the village of Motiers, in the Val-de-Travers, in the comté of Neufchâtel. If we read the correspondence of Voltaire, and other writings of his enemies, we should believe that he lived in a state of habitual warfare; — that his soul, ever in tumults, continually exhaled itself in vituperation and philippics; that he was perpetually engaged in underhand cabals and petty manœuvres. Rousseau disdained to be of any party. He admired Voltaire, as a man of vast genius — but refused to bow before the literary throne on which he had seated himself. This was his crime; and his punishment was the insolent sarcasms and brutal railleries of the great master of wit.

We may turn in all security from such false pictures to

the reality, depicted not only in his "Confessions," in his letters, and in his "Promenades d'un Solitaire"—these, as written by himself, might be open to suspicion — but to accounts afforded by impartial persons. Among these, the comte d'Escherney gives an interesting narration of his intercourse. A little distrust was shown on one occasion by the persecuted philosopher, but their friendship, except on this one occasion, was unclouded. The comte habitually dined with Rousseau: he praises his simple table, and the excellent cooking of Thérèse; whom, at the same time, he blames severely for the mischief she did by her unbridled and malicious tongue, — exciting against herself, and consequently against Rousseau, a spirit of dislike in the neighbourhood. He felt this — and at one time wished to remove; but did not put his desire in execution. While at Motiers he addicted himself sedulously to botany. In his herborising expeditions, he was accompanied by M. du Peyrou, an American settled at Bié — an excellent and respectable man, who became his fast friend; by the colonel De Puri, father-in-law of M. du Peyrou—both good botanists; and by the comte — who was obliged to learn the science, not to be thrown out entirely in conversation. Some of these expeditions were extensive; and the comte, after the lapse of years, speaks of them with pleasure, and dwells on the charm thrown over them by the conversation, the genius, the kind heart of Rousseau. The latter had many other friends in the neighbourhood, whom he tenderly loved. He remained at Motiers-Travers three years: he might have spent his life there, honoured, happy, and independent. When we relate the circumstances that drove him from it, we leave to impartial judges to decide whether he were in fault or his persecutors —who, for the most part, *soi-disant* philosophers and free thinkers, excited the spirit of bigotry against him, and did not hesitate hypocritically to assume the language of religion to destroy him.

Of what was he guilty? The accusations against him are few. The first, that he desired to attain noto-

riety by assuming the Armenian dress. All singularity in externals is foolish; and, though he excuses himself on the score of convenience, it was certainly unwise in him to dress so as to attract universal observation—especially in a country where the ignorant are easily taught to hate and fear that which they do not understand. But this fault is trivial. His second crime was his participating in the communion. He had re-entered the protestant church, some years before, at Geneva. He announced the greatest respect for the religion of the Gospel; but, as his Confession of a Savoyard Vicar argues against the divine nature of our Saviour, he had better have abstained from making this outward manifestation of orthodox belief.

The fault most urged against him was his renunciation of the citizenship of Geneva. No further attack on him had been made by the government of that city during the space of a year; and, considering the spirit of persecution abroad against him, it had been more prudent to have remained tranquil: but this very spirit, manifested in all writings, in all societies, roused him to assert himself. He had committed no crime, and he was sentenced as guilty. He had endeavoured to persuade his fellow citizens to rescind their decree; various representations were made to the council, not only by himself, but by the citizens and burgesses of Geneva. There could be no evil motive in his desire, or in the attempts he made to be reinstated in his rights in his native city; but this justice was refused him; and with anger and disdain he renounced his claims as citizen, and thus withdrew from their jurisdiction. This act can scarcely be deemed blameable; he, however, was attacked, and the council was defended, in several pamphlets, with acrimony and violence. The chief among these were "Lettres écrites de la Campagne," by M. Tronchin. The talent of the author gained the field for a moment. "Siluit terra!" Rousseau exclaims: no defender rose for him; it was deemed that he alone was able to reply. For a time he refused; but at last

yielded to the representations of his friends, and, parodying the title of the attack, brought out his "Lettres écrites de la Montagne." This had no influence over the council: they persisted in their refusal—and even reiterated their decree. From that moment Rousseau declared that he would mingle no more in public affairs;—and he kept his word.

But the mischief was already done. The quarrel between the citizens and council of Geneva, on the subject of the right of the latter to enact decrees without consulting the former, was attended with disturbances and bloodshed. The whole country was in tumults. The "Letters from the Mountain" were more anti-christian than any of his preceding works. The clergy were enraged: the peasantry of Neufchâtel were taught to regard him as a monster; from execration they proceeded to personal attack; stones were thrown at him during his walks—and at last, the ferment arriving at its height, his house was attacked in the night by the country people: it appeared certain that his life was in the utmost danger; the officers of government were disquieted by the apprehension of more fatal disturbances, and the probability of his being assassinated: he himself was sick at heart at finding himself the object of open and loud execration. Resolving to leave Motiers, he felt uncertain whither to go. His Parisian friends had interested David Hume in his behalf, and exhorted him to take up his abode in England. Frederic invited him to Berlin, where the friendship of lord Keith assured him a cordial welcome from at least one friend. He was inclined to a far wilder scheme;—the Corsicans had asked him to frame a code of laws, and he entertained the idea of establishing himself in their island. The sudden necessity of instant removal drove this idea from his mind; and another presented itself that accorded with his tastes. During his botanical rambles he had visited the island of St. Pierre, situated in the lake of Bienne, and dependent on the canton of Berne. The aspect of the isle had enchanted him. A difficulty arose, from his having

been ordered to quit the state of Berne on first arriving in Switzerland; but, on sounding the chiefs of the state, he was told that they were ashamed of their past conduct, and very willing that he should establish himself at St. Pierre. Here, then, in the month of September, he took up his abode: Theresa joined him: they boarded with the receiver of the island, who was its only inhabitant: the profits of his works, and a slight pension allowed him by lord Keith, assured him a frugal subsistence. Recurring, in after years, to his brief residence in this island, he fondly dilates on his excursions on the water—on his botanical studies—on the calm that possessed his soul, and his total indifference to all intercourse with the world. As an excuse for the persecutions he suffered, he is accused of intriguing and creating disturbances even in his solitude; but no facts are mentioned—no proofs are advanced. We cannot, indeed, believe that the morbid spirit of distrust so fatal to his peace, which soon afterwards manifested itself, did not in any degree exist; but there are no letters, no documents, to support the accusations—made principally, indeed, by the *soi-disant* philosophers—and, above all, by Voltaire, who could not endure that any other than himself should be a subject of interest; and who, more than an infidel—a blasphemer—joined with the most bigoted religionists in persecuting Rousseau.

1765. Ætat. 53.

Rousseau was not permitted long to enjoy the tranquil pleasures of his island residence. Suddenly, without preparation, he received an order from the state of Berne to quit their territory in three days. It was a clap of thunder—he could but obey—again he was a wanderer: some friends implored him to take up his residence at Bienne, an independent town; he almost consented, when a popular tumult, of which he was the object, drove him away.

He quitted Switzerland on the 29th of October. His first idea was to repair to Berlin. On arriving at Strasburgh he changed his mind: he gives no reason for this, except that he did not think that he could support the

journey; and that the kindness of the Strasburghers made him meditate passing the winter in their city. He was, in fact, deliberating between Prussia and England. He feared the influence of the Parisian philosophers on Frederic's mind; he knew that the king preferred the writings of Voltaire to his; he felt that they would not suit—that Frederic would neither take pleasure in his society, nor reverence him: he would fall into a subordinate position and humble obscurity—not as a private man, whose independence repays him for all, but as a neglected courtier and pensioner of royalty. These natural struggles, founded on common sense and knowledge of the world, were misinterpreted by his enemies.—Horace Walpole, who did not appreciate his genius, wrote a burlesque letter, as if from the king of Prussia—the point of which was, that Rousseau could not be happy unless persecuted: the sorrowful truth, and the miserable effects of persecution which were subverting even his reason, found no pity at the hands of these men.

But he had friends. The duchess of Luxembourg (the duke had died in the interim) and the countess de Boufflers, who were aware of the generosity of his conduct when he fled from France, exerted themselves to procure him an asylum. David Hume offered to escort him to England, and to establish him respectably there. Rousseau did not like the English; but the plan offered many advantages, and he consented. He took Paris in his way, where the prince of Conti received him with princely hospitality. "The prince," Rousseau writes, "chooses that I should be lodged and entertained with a magnificence which he well knows does not suit my tastes; but I comprehend that, under the circumstances, he wishes to give public testimony of the esteem with which he honours me." He received a great many visits; crowds followed him when he walked in the streets;—it is no wonder that he loved a people and a country where he received such flattering tokens of kindness and admiration.

Yet he was eager to quit Paris; he was in France on sufferance; he even received intimation from the duke
1766. de Choiseul not to prolong his stay. On the 2d of
Ætat. January, he departed with Hume and a M. de Luze, a
54. Genevese and a friend of his. There was great difficulty in knowing where to place the exile, when he arrived in England: his scanty income was far too slight to afford mere necessaries in this country: many plans were discussed; Rousseau rejected several. Thérèse le Vasseur was the great obstacle to his comfort. It was with difficulty that the prejudice against her as Rousseau's mistress could be got over; but worse remained in her own character. De Luze represents her as ignorant, mischievous, and quarrelsome; add to this, that heretofore Rousseau had treated her as a mere housekeeper, and she did not dine at table with his guests—now he insisted that she should be placed on an equality with himself.

Still he and Hume continued on friendly terms; and the latter entertained a sincere esteem for him. He wrote: "He is mild, gentle, modest, affectionate, disinterested, and, above all, endowed in a supreme degree with sensibility of heart." Rousseau insisted on establishing himself in solitude at a distance from London: an eligible residence was at last found for him. He passed two months in London and Chiswick. He was visited by all persons of distinction. "English manners," he wrote to a friend, "suit my taste; they can testify esteem, without cajolery." He then repaired to Wotton in Derbyshire — a house belonging to Mr. Davenport, but seldom inhabited by him: his host, to satisfy his delicacy, received nominal payment for his board and lodging; and here Rousseau and Thérèse took up their abode.

Here he wrote the first portion of his "Confessions;" and for a short time he appeared to take pleasure in his retreat, and to feel grateful to the friend who had procured it for him. A few weeks altered his feelings. He became acquainted with the pretended letter of the king

of Prussia, fabricated by Horace Walpole: he began to suspect that Hume allied himself to his detractors and enemies, and he renounced all commerce with him. So far indeed were his suspicions founded, that Hume had changed his opinion with regard to him. He still spoke of him as the most delightful man in the world, when in good humour, but found his distrust and suspicions, and accesses of melancholy, detract from the pleasure which his society afforded. He had joined also in the laugh raised by Walpole's letter, which, considering that Rousseau was his peculiar guest and friend, was indelicate and insulting. Brooding in loneliness, with only the ignorant, mischief-making Thérèse for a companion, during a dreary English winter, Rousseau's mind, ever distrustful, at once became fraught with suspicion. He felt himself deserted by Hume, — he believed himself to be betrayed. Living in obscurity and neglect in a country of the language of which he was ignorant, his imagination suggested that his enemies had entered into a combination to keep him there, so to gain an opportunity, undetected, of falsifying his writings and calumniating his character. These thoughts fermented in his brain till a species of insanity ensued. He fancied that all his letters were opened; that he was, in a manner, imprisoned at Wotton; and that the object of his enemies was to seize on his "Confessions;" the knowledge of their existence having excited this persecution. A pension of 100*l.* a year, which was conferred on him by George III. in honourable terms, did not appease his anxieties nor calm the fever of his mind. Under the dominion of these false ideas,— suddenly, after a year's residence, during which he had been treated with singular consideration and kindness, he left Wotton, traversed England, embarked; and when he arrived at Calais congratulated himself on his escape, as if honour and life had depended on it. The letter he left behind addressed to Mr. Davenport, and those he wrote to his friends, accusing his English protectors of treachery, and denouncing an universal

conspiracy against his reputation and writings, by proving that he was possessed by insanity, ought to have excited pity;—he met with none. An indignant cry was raised by Hume and echoed by his enemies, accusing him of base ingratitude, and a wicked intention to vilify his friends. This conduct served to excite his monomania to its highest pitch, by giving some colour to his suspicions; and he appeared to himself most calm and reasonable while he was the most entirely under the dominion of the species of insanity that had come over him. We must not, however, be misunderstood. Rousseau was very ill-treated; Voltaire and his sect spared no ridicule, no opprobrium; his friends, even Hume, would join in the laugh excited by Horace Walpole's fabrication; Baron d'Holbach and his coterie, reigned over by Grimm, never spoke of him except as a mixture of impostor and madman. Here was much for Rousseau to resent. But his madness consisted in the idea that there was an organised combination formed against him, which was to destroy his reputation while living, falsify his writings, and hand him down to posterity in the darkest colours. Such combinations are never formed; and those who fancy themselves the object of such are decidedly insane.*

1667. Ætat. 55. The consequence was that his personal friends continued to treat him with consideration. The prince of Conti offered him an asylum in his chateau de Trie, near Amiens. He remained there about a year. The unfortunate disposition of Thérèse soon turned all the servants and dependants of the place into enemies. He quickly felt the effects of the mischief she excited, and fancying that the cause existed not in her, but others, was glad to get away.

An exile and a wanderer, he could not tell where to take up his abode. At one time he appears to have

* There is an admirable letter addressed by the countess de Boufflers to Hume, which proves the ill-treatment which Rousseau met, and the general spirit of unkindness and treacherous ridicule in vogue against him; while at the same time the writer does not defend Rousseau's extravagant suspicions and conduct. The good sense and good taste of the whole letter is remarkable. Unfortunately placid David Hume had suffered himself to be led away by anger, and it was of no avail.

become aware of the bad disposition of Thérèse, and to have resolved to separate from her. It would appear that at this time he was married to her; but this act did not satisfy her discontent. She deserves blame certainly; but he deserves more for having chosen, in the first place, an ignorant woman, who had no qualities of heart to compensate for stupidity; and, secondly, for having injured instead of improving her disposition by causing her to abandon her children, and taking from her the occupations and interests that attend maternity. Dragging about with him this companion, he resided for some time in Dauphiné. His time was chiefly spent in herborising. He seemed

"The world forgetting, by the world forgot;"

but he was not satisfied. His restless dissatisfaction, and the unfortunate notion that an universal conspiracy was formed against him, caused him to renounce the pension which the king of England had conferred. The same passions engendered a thousand varying plans. He contemplated returning to Paris. As a first step, he remained for a short time at Lyons, and here satisfied his vanity as well as his better feelings by subscribing to the erection of a statue of Voltaire. The subscription, and the letter accompanying it, were applauded, much to the mortification of the latter, who tried vainly to have his name erased. Soon after, he repaired to the capital. As a preliminary, he quitted the Armenian dress which he had worn nearly ten years, being told officially that he would not be allowed to remain in Paris, if he attracted public attention by his singular costume. The permission he received to inhabit that city was, indeed, only tacit, and burdened with the condition that he should not publish any work,—a condition that displays in its most odious light the intolerance and tyranny of the old regime of France.

His arrival in Paris created a sensation; he was welcomed with enthusiasm. Madame du Deffand, who did not know him, and who dared not like him, since 1770. Ætat. 58.

Horace Walpole spoke of him with contempt, and who only saw through the eyes of the high society she frequented, speaks slightingly of his reception by what she calls "the populace of *beaux esprits*;" but she mentions also that he will have nothing to do with the great ladies of her acquaintance, nor their friends, and courtiers. Grimm (and we must remark that, though Grimm often speaks disparagingly of Rousseau, there is nothing absolutely false in his accounts in his Correspondence) writes that his return was the subject of conversation for many days. The people followed him in crowds in the street; he was invited out to dinner every day; and it only rested with him to frequent Parisian society most distinguished for talent and rank.

His object in returning to Paris appears to have been, in the first place, to give publicity to his "Confessions." Soon after his arrival he read them aloud before the count and countess d'Egmont, prince Pignatelli, the marquise de Mesmes, and the marquis de Juigné. We cannot justify his thus dragging the private life of his existent friends before the world: it is the most flagrant dishonesty in civilised society, and ought to be put on a par with picking pockets. We excuse Rousseau in a slight degree, since his act sprung from insanity. He believed that his enemies coalesced to defame him; that he could exculpate himself only by these "Confessions;" which, unless rendered public during life, would be falsified after he was dead; and he endeavoured to keep the secrets of his friends; though he limited his complaisance in this to hinting how much he could tell, if he liked. Madame d'Epinay was justly annoyed, and even alarmed, at the idea of being made the fable of the day. This lady had no excess of delicacy, since she left behind her memoirs that unveil the secrets of her life; but she could not endure that her name and actions should be made topics of public conversation during her life. She applied to M. de Sartine, lieutenant of police, to suppress any future readings; and apparently he complied with the wish, as there is only trace of one more, before seven auditors, which took place at

the instigation of a man who sought to establish an intimate friendship with their author.

Rousseau now established himself at Paris. Several persons have detailed their recollections of him during this latter part of his life; and there is something touching in the mixture of friendliness and distrust, of gloom and gaiety, of frugality and hospitality, which the various details record. Every word we read stamps the "Confessions" with truth, and animates them with a living image; for when we find how eloquent, agreeable, and warm-hearted he was, even when oppressed by long physical suffering and heavy mental disquietudes, we may believe that he was fascinating in his younger days.

He lived in Paris, in Rue Platiere, in a fourth story. His one room was furnished with mere necessaries — two little beds, a chest of drawers, a table, a spinnet, and some chairs; and he was triumphantly happy when, having paid for these few things, he could call them his own. Some boxes and pots filled with plants stood in his window, where he often scattered crumbs for the sparrows: all was neat and clean; and the simplicity and peace that reigned in the little chamber imparted the most agreeable impressions. He occupied himself by copying music, which he did with exquisite neatness and correctness: the only use he made of his celebrity was to ask rather a high price for his work. Many persons employed him, so to find a pretence for intruding on his solitude and staring at him. He did not scruple to be rude to those whom he saw were attracted by mere impertinent curiosity — to all others he was civil if not complaisant. The sole real blot on his household was Thérèse, whom every one mentions with dislike and disrepect.

The prince de Ligne describes the visit he paid: he went under the pretence of seeking a M. Rousseau of Thoulouse, and contrived, while excusing himself for the mistake, to slide into conversation. Rousseau submitted to be drawn out by an utter and unnamed stranger, without the slightest appearance of distrust. The

prince asked him about his music, and then alluded to literature, and quoted one of the opinions Rousseau had himself advanced, of the danger of certain literary acquirements: in a moment he was on the alert to reply, entering into the argument with more eloquence than he had ever showed in his writings, and developing his ideas with delicacy and precision; for it is remarkable that the embarrassment and confusion of ideas, of which Rousseau complains as habitual to him in conversation, never occurred, except when he fancied that something was expected, and his extreme shyness interfered to perplex his ideas, and even his utterance. But in the common course of conversation all agree in describing him as more than entertaining, as fascinating, through his eloquence, his perspicuity, and the vivacity and energy of his imagery and ideas; but these were not to be exercised on the trivial topics of the day, but on the high moral and philosophical sentiments and opinions that warmed his soul. On leaving him, the prince wrote him a letter, telling him who he was, and offering him an asylum in his states. His letter is a singular one; he tells him that no one knew how to read in his country, and that he would neither be admired nor persecuted. He continues: "You shall have the key of my books and my gardens; you shall see me or not as you please; you shall have a small country-house a mile from mine, where you can sow and plant just as you like; as, like you, I dislike thrones and dominations, you shall rule no one, and no one will rule you. If you accept my offers, I will lead you myself to the Temple of Virtue — such shall be the name of your abode, though we will not call it thus; I will spare your modesty all the triumphs you have well deserved."

The prince declares that this letter was written in the sincerity of his heart; afterwards it was spread through Paris as a bad imitation of Horace Walpole's fabrication, and Rousseau himself believed that it was a trick. However, at first he took it as sincere, and called on the prince: he described his misfortunes, his enemies,

the conspiracy of all Europe against him, with an eloquence that charmed while it inspired pity. "His eyes were two stars," the prince writes: "his genius shone in his face and electrified me; he was touched by the effect he produced, and, convinced of my enthusiasm, he showed gratitude for the interest I took in his welfare."

Madame de Genlis made acquaintance with him soon after his return to Paris. She says she never met a literary man with less pretension, and more amiable: he spoke of himself with simplicity, and of his enemies without bitterness; he did entire justice to the talents of Voltaire; he had a most agreeable smile, full of delicacy and gentleness; he was communicative, and often very gay. He talked extremely well on music, in which he was a real connoisseur. Rousseau dined with this lady and her husband frequently. Their first quarrel arose from M. de Genlis sending him two dozen bottles of a wine he had praised, instead of two, which he had consented to accept. Nothing could be in worse taste than the pleasure which all the rich acquaintance of Rousseau took in making him presents, after he had declared he would not receive any. He always sent them back; and they reaped the pleasure of at once displaying their generosity without expense, and of railing at his misanthropy. The quarrel which put an end to his acquaintance with madame de Genlis is somewhat unintelligible. Rousseau took offence at something that passed at a theatre; and, instead of supping with his friends as he had agreed, walked sullenly away. Madame de Genlis was offended in her turn, and their intercourse was never renewed.

Bernardin de Saint Pierre, author of "Paul and Virginia," has left delightful details of his visits to the recluse. They are far too long to quote: we can only mention that they impress the reader with love and esteem for Rousseau. Sometimes Saint Pierre was hurt by outbursts of Rousseau's umbrageous temper, and on one occasion complained of his morose manner and unjust

suspicions, and asked whether he desired to quarrel with him. Rousseau replied, with emotion, "I should be sorry to see you too often, but still more sorry not to see you at all. I fear intimacies, and have closed my heart against them; my temper masters me, do you not perceive it? I suppress it for a time, but at last it overcomes me, and bursts forth in spite of my endeavours. I have my faults; but, when we value the friendship of any one, we must take the benefit with all its burdens." Saint Pierre adds, "that these fits of distrust were rare, that he was usually gay, confiding, and frank; when I saw him gloomy, I knew some sad thought perplexed him: I began talking of Plutarch, and he came to himself as if awakening from a dream."

Saint Pierre gives a pleasing account of the respect in which the Parisians held him. They went together to hear the "Iphigenia" of Gluck: the crowd and pressure were great; Rousseau was old; Saint Pierre felt desirous to name him, and so to obtain protection: he hesitated, fearful to offend; at length he whispered it to one or two, begging them to keep the secret. Scarcely was the word uttered than a deep silence ensued, the crowd looked respectfully on him, and emulated each other in shielding him from pressure, without any one repeating the name that had been revealed. At one time he suspected Saint Pierre of being in league with his enemies; his friend insisted on an explanation, and succeeded in convincing him of his innocence, though he still believed that his enemies had endeavoured to make a cat's-paw of him.

He thus lived for some years in Paris, occupied by copying music, and sometimes seized with a desire for composing it; herborising in the environs of the capital, seeing a few friends, and too often brooding in solitude over the combination he believed formed against him throughout Europe. As his health grew worse, these last fatal ideas became more and more engrossing. He quarrelled with Gluck for writing music to French words, saying that his only object was to give him the

lie, because he had declared the French language to be unfit for music. He was angry when he heard that the "Divin du Village" was represented and applauded; saying that it was done under the pretence that the music was stolen. He occupied himself on his unfortunate work of "Rousseau Juge de Jean Jaques," which is a monument of the frenzy which it served to confirm; yet at the same time he wrote his "Promenades d'un Solitaire," which, with the exception of some of the letters of the "Nouvelle Heloise," and a few passages in the "Confessions," are the most finished, the most interesting, and eloquent of his works: the peculiar charm of Rousseau reigns throughout; a mixture of lofty enthusiasm, of calm repose, and of the most delicate taste.

The friends about him saw traces of attacks of absolute madness: he could no longer apply himself to his task of copying music, and the miseries of poverty began to be felt in his household. M. de Corancez tried to bring a remedy, by offering him a house at Sceaux, in which to live: Rousseau refused, yet hesitated. M. de Girardin offered his house at Ermenonville, where the superb gardens, of which he was proprietor, might well tempt a lover of nature. Thérèse favoured this offer — Rousseau consented to accept it, and his removal was effected with some precipitancy. It might have been supposed that the charm of his new abode would have calmed his mind and restored his health. It was not so. Great obscurity hangs over the last scene of his life. He died suddenly at Ermenonville, on the 2d of July, two months after his departure from Paris. The surgeons who examined his body pronounced, at their examination, that he died of a serous apoplexy. 1778. Ætat. 66.

Many circumstances combine to engender the suspicion that this opinion was given merely to prevent scandal, and that in reality he shot himself. It is certain that, at the moment of death, instead of being senseless, he was carried to the window, which he caused to be thrown open; the weather was beautiful, and he

contemplated the fair scene spread around, the shady gardens and serene sky, while he bade a calm adieu to life.

The cause of his suicide, if he really committed it, must be found in his perpetual physical sufferings, in his weariness of life, and in the accesses of insanity with which he was certainly sometimes visited : to this M. de Corancez adds a discovery of the worthless character of Thérèse. The last is merely conjecture. She married a groom of M. Girardin, a year after her husband's death ; and he gives her credit for a criminal intercourse with this man, discovered by Rousseau, during his life.

His existence had become a dream of bodily and mental suffering ; and whether the disease that preyed on him affected his brain with death, or excited him to arm himself against his own life, is a secret difficult to penetrate. The latter seems most probable. He died peacefully, and the heart that had beat so wildly, and the brain pregnant with an ardent love of truth, and with so many wild delusions, were delivered over to the peace of the grave.

As a protestant he could not be buried in sacred ground, he was therefore interred in the island of Poplars, in the gardens of Ermenonville. The funeral took place in the evening. The solitary spot shadowed over by trees, through whose foliage the moon shone, the calm of the evening hour, and the lonely grave, were in accordance with the singular but noble character of the man.

On his tomb was inscribed—

Ici repose
L'Homme de la Nature
et de la Vérité.
Vitam impendere vero.

These last words he had adopted as his device. His grave ought to have been held sacred ; but, in the rage for desecration that possessed the French at the period of the revolution, the body was exhumed and placed in the Pantheon. When the allies invaded France, out of

respect for his memory, Ermenonville was exempted from contribution.

Rousseau has described himself; but, though sincere in an unexampled degree, it is difficult to appreciate his character from the "Confessions." A recent writer, Barante, founding his opinion on this work, considers him a proud and envious egotist, full of vague aspirations after virtue, incapable of a virtuous deed; yet we find Saint Pierre, who knew him during the latter years of his life, when the struggle between circumstances and his disposition had ceased, and his character was formed, applaud his firm probity, his mild benevolence, his frankness and natural gaiety of heart. One fact stamps Rousseau with nobleness of soul. We turn to the pages of Voltaire's Correspondence, and find it full of the most vilifying and insolent epithets applied to his great contemporary—the opprobrium and insult with which he loads his name bearing the stamp of the impurity and arrogance of his own heart. Rousseau never spoke ill of Voltaire: when others dispraised, he defended him; this might be the result of pride, but it was a noble and generous pride.

Rousseau was proud; nourished in dreams of ancient virtue or chivalrous romance, he respected himself, and he felt deeply aggrieved if he did not meet respect in others. It is a strange anomaly to find this proud man confessing the most degrading errors; but this arose from the highest pride of all, and the most mistaken: he declared his faults, and yet assumed himself to be better than other men.

Was Rousseau envious? Grimm says, that anger at finding men of greater genius preferred engendered most of his ill-humour against society. But who were these superior men? not Voltaire, with whom, as older than himself, he never competed: it was Helvetius, Thomas, and, above all, Diderot. Whatever merits Diderot had in society and conversation, he is so poor a writer that Rousseau could never have been really hurt by any mistaken preference shown

him. Envy, base as it is, does not stoop to envy that which is immeasurably inferior. Rousseau had certainly sufficient cause to be displeased with Diderot, the tone of his letters being arrogant and presumptuous; but his real displeasure was caused by the belief that he had betrayed him, when he confided to him his sentiments for madame d'Houdetot: balked and trampled on all sides, he was stung to resent his disappointment somewhere, and he selected Diderot for his victim. This was very wrong and self-deceptive: he quotes good authority for proving the propriety of declaring to the world that he and Diderot were no longer friends, and there was no great harm in so doing; but when he appended the quotation from Ecclesiastes in a note, accusing Diderot of a great social crime, the betraying the secret of a friend, he erred grossly, and cannot be defended.

Rousseau had passed his existence in romantic reveries. This abstraction of mind always engenders an indolence that concentrates the mind in self, and hates to be intruded upon by outward circumstances. Pride and indolence conjoined, created the independence of spirit for which he took praise to himself. Independence is of two sorts. When we sacrifice our pleasures and our tastes to preserve the dear privilege of not deferring our principles and feelings to others, we foster an exalted virtue; but the independence that finds duty an unwelcome clog—that regards the just claims of our fellow-creatures as injurious and intolerable, and that casts off the affections as troublesome shackles—is one of the greatest errors that the human heart can nourish; and such was the independence to which Rousseau aspired when he neglected the first duty of man by abandoning his children. He often dilates on simple pleasures—the charms of unsophisticated affections, and the ecstasy to be derived from virtuous sympathy—he, who never felt the noblest and most devoted passion of the human soul—the love of a parent for his child! We cannot help thinking that even while Rousseau de-

fends himself by many baseless sophisms, that this crime, rankling at his heart, engendered much of the misery that he charged upon his fellow-creatures. Still Barante is unjust when he declares Rousseau's life to have been devoid of virtuous actions. He was unpretendingly charitable; and his fidelity to Thérèse, unworthy as she was, deserves praise. It would have been easy to cast her off, and gain a more suitable companion; but he bore her defects; and even to the last, when it has been suspected that her worthlessness drove him to suicide, he never complained. There was, with all his errors, great nobleness in Rousseau's soul. The pride and envy of which he is accused led him to cherish poverty, to repel benefits, to suspect his friends, but never to cringe, or grasp, or lie. Distrust was his chief error — a mighty one — but it did not injure others, while it destroyed himself.

Of his works, the "Emile" stands in the first rank for its utility: his theories however engendered some errors. The notion to which he was attached, that entire independence, even of natural duties, was the state congenial to man, mars many of his views. He would not allow a man to be a father, scarcely a woman to be a mother; yet such are the natural and imperative duties of life, even in the most primitive states of society. We may add a further defect, gathered partly from the continuation he projected. Sophie proves faithless; and Emile, meditating on the conduct he ought to pursue, makes himself the centre of his reflections, nor reverts to the claims which his unhappy wife and blameless child have still on him. He leaves both to the mercy of a hard world, and affords another proof of Rousseau's natural deficiency in a sense of duty. Barante well observes that the "Emile" is the less useful, because it gives no rules for public education; and public education is doubtless the best fitted to form the character of social man. Properly carried on, it prevents all need of having recourse to those plans and impostures which deface Rousseau's system. The little world of boys

brings its own necessities and lessons with it: the chief care devolving on the master, to prevent the elder and stronger from domineering over the young and weak.

He perverts virtue and vice in the "Heloïse" still more glaringly, and clashes against the prejudices of every country. In France, the fault of an unmarried girl was regarded as peculiarly degrading and even ridiculous, and the early error of Julie therefore could find little sympathy in that country. In ours we commiserate such; but we turn disgusted from her wedding another man; and the marriage with the elderly Wolmar, which Rousseau makes the crown of her virtue, is to us the seal of her degradation. His ideas also of a perfect life are singularly faulty. It includes no instruction, no endeavours to acquire knowledge and refine the soul by study; but is contracted to mere domestic avocations, and to association with servants and labourers, on their own footing of ignorance, though such must lead to mean and trivial occupations and thoughts.

No author knows better than Rousseau how to spread a charm over the internal movements of the mind, over the struggles of passion, over romantic reveries that absorb the soul, abstracting it from real life and our fellow-creatures, and causing it to find its joys in itself. No author is more eloquent in paradox, and no man more sublime in inculcating virtue. While Voltaire taints and degrades all that is sacred and lovely by the grossness of his imagination, Rousseau embellishes even the impure, by painting it in colours that hide its real nature; and imparts to the emotions of sense all the elevation and intensity of delicate and exalted passion.

CONDORCET.

1744—1794.

Marie Jean Antoine de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, was born at Saint Quentin, in Picardy, on the 17th of September, 1744. It is said that at an early age he gave tokens of the talents that distinguished him. The bent of his genius led him to the study of the exact sciences. It is the distinction of these pursuits that they lead at once to celebrity. A discovery in mathematics can neither be denied nor passed over.

Condorcet, at the age of twenty-one, was the author of a memoir on the integral calculus, one of the highest branches of the pure mathematics, in which at that time but small advances had been made, although it has since become one of the most powerful instruments of physical investigation. This essay gave him at once a title to be regarded as a successor worthy of Newton and Leibnitz, whose discoveries in the infinitesimal analysis he subsequently extended. This essay was published in the *Mémoires des Savants Etrangers*, and he was elected coadjutor of Grandjean de Fouchy, in the secretaryship of the Academy of Sciences. Eager to justify the choice of the Academy, he continued successfully to direct his labours to the higher mathematics. Among his essays on these branches of science may be mentioned a general method of finding the integral of an equation in finite terms whenever such an integral exists, and the general solution of the problem of maxima and minima. Had he continued to cultivate pure mathematics, there can be no doubt that he would have attained the greatest celebrity in that department of science.

Condorcet's mind was one of those in which reason preponderates to the exclusion of the imagination, so

that whatever could not be definitively proved to his understanding he considered absurd. This texture of intellect, at a time when philosophy was at work to discard, not only the errors of catholicism, but to subvert Christianity itself, led him to ally himself with men who, while they exerted themselves to enlighten and enfranchise their fellow-creatures from the miseries of superstition, unfortunately went a step beyond, and overthrew, though they knew it not, the boundaries of morals as well as of religion. These men, for the most part, benevolent, studious, and virtuous, believed it easy to lead their fellow-creatures into the same road which they themselves trod; and that, bigotry and superstition being overthrown, persecution would vanish, and mankind live in a brotherhood of peace. Their passions being under their control, they supposed that, could reason be equally developed in all men, they would become, like themselves, dispassionate and tolerant. Condorcet was the intimate friend of D'Alembert; he visited Voltaire with him at Fernay, and was hailed as the youngest and most promising of his disciples. The latter certainly did not possess the calmness and disciplined mind of D'Alembert, but his genius and ardent benevolence brought excuses for the errors of his temper; and Condorcet, while he saw his faults, paid the tribute of flattery which the patriarch of French literature considered his due. As he became intimate with these philosophers, and participated in their views, he began to consider that there were truths of more importance than mathematical demonstrations, — truths that would subvert the impostures of priests, and give men nobler and higher rules of action than those instituted by the papal church. It is the misfortune of catholicism that, by entangling the absurd and the true, those who throw off its errors are too apt, without examination, to cast away the truths which it has overgrown and distorted; but which minds of truer discernment can see and acknowledge. Condorcet, on first engaging in the labours of moral philosophy, took the easier path of refuting

others, rather than developing novel ideas of his own. His application and his memory had caused his mind to be richly stored with every kind of knowledge — add to this he was a profound logician. His first work of polemical philosophy was a refutation of the "Dictionnaire des Trois Siécles," by Sabathier de Castres. He assumed the epistolary form of argument, which is at once the easiest, and affords the fairest scope for the various arms of ridicule and reasoning. Voltaire hailed his work with delight, and bestowed a degree of praise highly encouraging to the young author.

His next labour was the arrangement and examination of the "Pensées" of Pascal. That illustrious christian founded his system on the original weakness and sin of man. He represented him as a miserable, feeble, suffering being; spawned, as it were, by eternity, and cast on a narrow shoal of time; unknowing of the past, terrified by the future, helpless and lost in the present; and showed that the knowledge and the promises of the Redeemer were the only stay and the only consolation of his trembling, painful, and yet sinful existence. Condorcet took an opposite view of human nature. He regarded it as a power that by its laws assimilated all reason, all good, all knowledge, to its essence, but that tyranny and error stepped between; and the frauds of priests and the oppression of political institutions, taking from this being leisure and freedom of thought, reduced him to the feeble, ignorant, erring state in which most men are sunk. Casting the blame of the faults and ignorance of man on governments, he declared that these ought to be the objects of improvement and enlightenment to the philosopher; for, if these were in the advance of human knowledge, instead of lagging so far behind, mankind would speedily rise to a higher level, and grow, like the laws they obeyed, wise, just, and equal. This work appeared of such importance to Voltaire that he reprinted it himself, adding a preface, in which he said, "This true philosopher holds Pascal in the scales, and is the weightier of the two."

Condorcet was the friend of Turgot, a minister whose virtues and genius attached to him all the more enlightened men of the day. His ministry, however, was stormy, since he was among the first who endeavoured to bring a remedy to the ruined finances of France, without being permitted to strike at the root of the evil — unequal taxation and extravagant expenditure. His edict touching the sale of corn excited popular commotions, and was attacked by Necker. Condorcet undertook to answer Necker's book, but was on the unpopular side, and therefore not read. He wrote a series of laudatory biographical essays on various academicians, and men of science and celebrity, Euler, Franklin, D'Alembert, and others. In these he, at the same time, developed his scientific knowledge and his theory of the perfectibility of the human species. Every useful and liberal cause found him its partisan. He was one among the opponents of negro slavery; and, feeling that diatribes against the cruelty and wickedness of the slave trade would not avail with those who regarded it as advantageous to the country, he argued to prove its political and commercial inexpediency. He was a laborious and prolific writer, urged on by a strong sense of duty; for, firmly believing that the wisdom of philosophers was of vast influence in improving the moral condition of mankind, he believed it to be the primal duty of thinking men to propagate their opinions. In his life of Turgot he details his theories of the perfectibility of his species, which the minister had also entertained. He undertook an edition of the works of Voltaire, and wrote the life of that great wit, one of the best and most elegant of his works. To escape persecution, or to give greater force to his writings, he published several of his writings under fictitious names. In this manner, he brought out his "Reflections on Negro Slavery" under the name of Swartz, a pastor of Bienne. A biographer observes on this work, that "the simplicity, elegance, and precision of the style; the forcible arguments, respect for misfortune, and indignation at

crime ; the tone which inviolable probity inspires, and which art cannot imitate, obtained signal success for this work. Those who were fortunate enough to be intimate with Condorcet easily raised the veil under which he concealed himself." In the same way, he adopted the name of a citizen of Newhaven, when he wrote to refute a book by De Lolme, in praise of the English constitution, insisting, in particular, on the benefits arising from two legislative chambers. Condorcet argued that all just government ought to be founded on giving preponderance to the majority ; and he brought all his logic to prove that to confide the task of legislation to two chambers, one of which should propose and the other sanction laws, was to give to the minority a power superior to that enjoyed by the majority; since that which had been proposed unanimously in one chamber might be rejected by a slight majority in the other. He went on to establish maxims and legal fictions by which it would be possible to ascertain the desires of the majority in a state,—a question that occupied his serious consideration in other works. Condorcet, in these writings, showed his attachment to all that should ameliorate the social condition, and enlarge the sphere of intellect among his fellow-creatures. He did not, in his reasonings, give sufficient force to the influence of passion, especially when exerted over masses, nor the vast power which the many have when they assert themselves, nor the facility with which the interested few can lead assembled numbers into error and crime. D'Alembert called Condorcet a volcano covered by snow. There are men of great personal susceptibility, uncontrolable passions, and excitable imaginations, who have the same power over their fellow-creatures that fire has over materials cast upon it—they impart their energy, even though it be for self-destruction, to all around. There are others, and among such was Condorcet, of great but regulated enthusiasm of soul;—which enthusiasm, derived from abstract principles and founded on severe reason, is more steady, more disinterested,

and more enduring than that springing from passion; but it exercises little immediate influence over others, and is acknowledged and appreciated only in hours of calm. Amidst the tempest of political struggles it is passed by as timid, cold, and impotent.

A philosopher of this sort was destined to have great influence at the commencement of the French Revolution, while men acted from a sense of right and a virtuous desire to found the changes they brought about on reason, justice, and the good of mankind. His integrity caused him to be respected, and his powers of mind to receive attention.

He anticipated change, and had contributed to it by spreading abroad his opinions for the enfranchisement of the French people from the laws and customs that ground them to the earth. When the ferment began he assisted in directing it by his writings, and assembled at his house the most distinguished men of the liberal party. He was now no longer a young man. Habit had confirmed all his opinions, while mature years imparted that calm which caused him to see clearly and act firmly, but without precipitation or violence. On the convocation of the states general, he wrote a declaration of the rights of man, to serve as a guide and model to the future legislators of his country. He caused it to be translated into English by Dr. Gems, and brought it out as the work of an American. When the states general met, he became more and more absorbed by the political state of his country. He did not make one of the assembly; but the influence from without was of vast importance, not only to inspire the members with energy and constancy, but to daunt the court and the nobles, who scarcely understood and longed to spurn the claimants of a power of which they had long held possession, while they misused it to the ruin first of their country and then of themselves. Condorcet wrote a refutation of an address presented in favour of the court and the privileged orders, and demanded a partial confiscation of church property to pay the national debt. He pub-

1788. Ætat. 44.

lished a pamphlet, entitled "On what has been done, and what remains to do," full of clear and useful views for the future. He thus became a portion of the revolution, and allied himself with its more illustrious chiefs, who afterwards formed the girondist party,—a sect which was republican in heart, but which would have been satisfied with a limited monarchy, could they have depended on the fidelity of the king to the constitution. The chief object of Condorcet's attacks was the church. He was an infidel, and believed philosophy to be a better guide than religion both for states and individuals; besides this, he looked on the French clergy as a peculiarly obnoxious priesthood. The quarrels of the molinists and jansenists,—the extermination of the huguenots,—the war they carried on against all knowledge and freedom,—made him ardently desire to limit their power within strict bounds, and he was eager to lessen their wealth, as the first sure step towards decreasing their influence.

On every occasion he came forward to enlighten and guide the decisions of the assembly by his published arguments. He discussed the injury to arise from a division of the legislative power into two chambers, and showed great sagacity when he demonstrated the evils attendant on the system of assignats.

The weakness of the unfortunate king, who yielded to the new state of things only on compulsion, and turned his eyes towards the emigrants and foreign potentates as deliverers, still hoping for a restoration to absolute power, caused the moderate party of girondists to abandon the cause of royalty altogether, and to believe that there was no possibility of confirming the blessings which they believed that their country reaped from the revolution, nor of protecting the nation from invasion, and the re-establishment of absolutism armed with foreign soldiers for the execution of vengeance, except in the dethronement of the king and erection of a republic. The flight of Louis to Varennes put the

seal of conviction on these opinions. It was believed that he fled only to return with the Austrians and the emigrants, armed to exterminate the friends of liberty. Condorcet pronounced on this occasion a violent speech against monarchy, and followed up his attack by a series of bitter articles in a paper called "The Republican." His popularity increased greatly through this course. He was designated by the jacobins as governor of the dauphin, but Louis refused to ratify
1791. the nomination. He was also appointed commissioner
Ætat. of the treasury; which, at his desire, changed its name
47. to the national instead of the royal treasury; and he was elected member of the new representative assembly by the electors of the city of Paris itself. He drew up the article of "The National Assembly" in the "Chronicle," on this occasion, to enlighten his colleagues on the state of the nation, and the measures proper to be taken for its security.

In all his speeches and projected decrees he mingled the most determined opposition to such acts and establishments as he believed to be hostile to the liberty of his country, with mildness and justice towards individuals. Thus, on the 25th of October, he made a speech on the subject of emigration, which at the time that it was delivered excited the warmest applause, and the printing of it was voted. In this discourse, he drew a line between the emigrants who left their country for the sake merely of withdrawing from the political disturbances, and those who entertained the nefarious project of exciting foreign powers to invade France, and meditated carrying arms themselves against their countrymen. He denounced the connivance of the court with the intrigues at Coblentz. He showed the necessity of firm measures, and asserted that an unasked pardon held out to the emigrants gave birth to contempt merely among the haughty nobles who expected a speedy triumph over a class of men whom they despised. A few days after, the mountain party attacked his purposed decree as insufficient and feeble, and it was abandoned.

This alliance with foreign governments and the complicity of the court with the emigrants, roused a spirit in France, at first noble and heroic, till, led away by base and sanguinary men, grandeur of purpose merged into ferocity, and heroism became a thirst of blood such as mankind had never displayed before towards men of the same colour and language as themselves, and can be compared only to the conduct of the Spaniards in the newly discovered world.

But the first burst of generous indignation against the traitors who carried arms against their country, and the crowned foes who denounced the actual government of France as rebellious, to be punished by the devastation and subjection of the nation, found an echo in every patriotic heart not misled by enthusiasm for royalty. On the 27th of December Vergniaud proposed an address to the French people, which was greatly applauded though not adopted. Two days after Condorcet presented his declaration, which was received with triumphant and unanimous acclamations. This declaration is dignified and firm, and shows the just as well as generous spirit which animated the greater portion of the assembly, till the panic engendered by the advance of the armies threw the power into the hands of the ferocious minority. "At the moment when, for the first time since the acquirement of liberty," —thus ran his manifesto, — "the French people may find themselves reduced to exercise the terrible right of war, her representatives owe to Europe and to all humanity a declaration of the motives that have guided the resolutions of France, and an exposition of the principles that will rule their conduct. The French nation renounces the entering on any war with a view of making conquests, and will never employ her force against the liberty of any country. Such is the sacred vow by which we have allied our welfare to the welfare of every other nation, and to which we will be faithful. France will take up arms with regret but with ardour, to insure her own safety, her internal tranquillity; and

will lay them down with joy when she no longer fears for that liberty and equality which are become the only elements in which Frenchmen can live." When, soon after, the country seemed menaced by civil war, the departments regarding with fear and jealousy the proceedings in Paris, Condorcet again ascended the tribune to propose an exposition of their conduct, as due, not to the calumniators of the revolution, but to those timid and mistaken men, who, at a great distance, were led away by false and fabricated accounts. He then read an address which contained the history of the labours of the assembly and an exposition of its principles. The address was voted by acclamation, and ordered to be printed and distributed in the departments.

The integrity of Condorcet raised him high in the esteem of his countrymen; as springing from the class of nobles, his disinterestedness could not be doubted. He loved his country, he loved reason and knowledge, and virtuous conduct and benevolent sentiments. He was, with all this, a determined republican. His favourite theory being the perfectibility of mankind, he rejected that view of human nature which inculcates the necessity of ruling the many by the few, and sinking the majority of his fellow-creatures in ignorance and hard labour; he wished all to be enlightened as to their duties, and all to tend equally to the improvement of their intellectual and moral nature. These theories, if they be mistaken, emanate from benevolent and just feelings. They made him a democrat, because the very corner-stone of royalty and aristocracy is the setting apart a class of men to possess the better gifts of fortune and education, and the reduction of the rest to a state of intellectual dependence and physical necessity.

1792. Ætat. 48. When the king exercised his veto, and put a stop to the measures considered necessary by the assembly for the safety of France, Condorcet, even as early as the month of March, represented the monarchical power as at open war with the nation, and proposed that the

king should be considered as having abdicated. His view met with few co-operators at that crisis, and was set aside. He busied himself, at the same time, in forming a plan of national education, and brought forward a system on a more philosophical and comprehensive scale than had hitherto been meditated. It was his design to secure to the human race, to use his own expressions, the means of satisfying their necessities, and securing their welfare; of knowing and exercising their rights, and of understanding and fulfilling their duties; giving scope to all to carry their industry to a state of perfection, and to render themselves capable of the social functions which they were called upon to exert; to develope to their extent the talents given them by nature; and thus to establish in the nation a real equality, so to meet the political equality established by law.

The system of instruction which was to realise so blessed a state of society he considered as properly placed in the hands of government. He looked forward, indeed, to the time when public establishments for education would become superfluous and even detrimental; but this would only be when right reason prevailed, and it was no longer necessary for the wiser few to labour to destroy the prejudices and mistakes of the ignorant many; when superstition should be no more; and when each man should find in his own knowledge, and in the rectitude of his mind, arms sufficient to combat every species of imposition.

Condorcet looked on virtue as capable of exact demonstration, as conducive to public and individual happiness, and on man as a sufficiently reasonable being to follow its dictates, if sufficiently enlightened, without the aid of religion or the coercion of punishment. He regarded the passions as capable of being controlled by the understanding. He, benevolent and conscientious, practising no vice, carefully extirpating from his mind all that he believed to be error, was to himself a mirror in which the whole human race was reflected.

Also, like all the French politicians of that day, he wished to treat mankind like puppets, and fancied that it was only necessary to pull particular strings to draw them within the circle of order and reason. We none of us know the laws of our nature; and there can be little doubt that, if philosophers like Condorcet did educate their fellows into some approximation to their rule of right, the ardent feelings and burning imaginations of man would create something now unthought of, but not less different from the results he expected, than the series of sin and sorrow which now desolates the world. It is not for this that we would throw a slur over the upright endeavours of the pious and the good to improve their fellows; but we do over any endeavour of government to bind the intellect in chains. It was, therefore, in some degree, for the best, that his views were not followed out. When his plan for national education and a national society of arts and sciences, charged with the duty of overlooking and directing public instruction,—for the purpose not only of enlightening the present generation, but of preparing the human species for an indefinite advance in wisdom and virtue,—when this plan was presented by the chief Girondists to the court, a friend of Condorcet, struck with dismay at the degree of power that would accrue to the rulers, said, "If they adopt your plan, our freedom is destroyed." "Fear nothing," replied Condorcet, "ignorance and vanity will make them reject it." Unfortunately, the treaty carried on by the Girondists with the court on this occasion injured their popularity. The French were at a crisis that demanded that their rulers should think only of measures and acts adapted to it. The mountain party felt this, and acted for the day, and thus succeeded in overthrowing their rivals, who philosophically and calmly legislated for future generations, while their single object ought to have been to save the living one from the foreign foe and their own evil passions.

The manifesto of the duke of Brunswick was the first cause of the madness which was soon to make France an example of the crimes that may be committed by a people in the name of liberty. When first this manifesto spread indignation and fear through France, Condorcet made himself conspicuous by a speech proposing an address to the king to express the discontent of the assembly at his lukewarm disapprobation of the actions of the emigrants, and his want of energy in repulsing the offers of foreign potentates to deliver him from the hands of his subjects and the shackles of the constitution which he had accepted. The subsequent dethronement of the king and establishment of a republic were events after his own heart. A commission had been named, during the first days of 1792.
August, to examine the question of the abolition of monarchy, and Condorcet was named reporter. He considered it, in the first place, necessary to explain to the people the grounds on which he went, and drew up a paper which he called "Instruction préparatoire sur l'Exercise du Droit de Souvraineté;" in which he expounded, that as foreign potentates had denounced every Frenchman who defended the liberties of his country as rebels to be punished by death, and as the monarch treacherously weakened their powers of defence against the foe, so was it right and necessary that the nation should take the sovereignty into their own hands. When the events of the 10th of August had sealed the fate of the unhappy Louis, Condorcet proposed a declaration of the motives that led to his being set aside, which, while it strongly accused the monarch and his court of betraying the cause of the people, was animated by a spirit of fairness, moderation, and dignity, that did honour to the cause which he espoused.

Condorcet's popularity was now at its height and he was courted even by the jacobins and the mountain party. He was invited by several departments to represent them in the new convention. Madame Roland accuses him of pusillanimity: perhaps her accusation is partly

founded on the fact that at this moment of fierce rivalship and strife between the Girondists and Mountain, he rather strove to conciliate the latter than to drive the struggle to extremities. He had a high esteem for the talents of Danton, and often remarked, with regard to the jacobins, that it were better to moderate than to quarrel with them. He was named at this time one of the committee to draw up a constitution, and his labours were chiefly employed on this object.

Looking upon the king as the treacherous enemy of the new state of things in France, and therefore, according to his reasoning, of France itself, he did not hesitate to name Louis a traitor during the debate that followed the monarch's trial; but he did not vote for his death. "All different degrees of punishment for the same offence," he argued, "was an offence against equality. The punishment of conspirators is death; but this punishment is contrary to my principles, and I will never vote it. I cannot vote for imprisonment, for no law gives me the power; I vote for the heaviest punishment established in the penal code that is not death." He afterwards voted for the reprieve for the king until the peace; but the struggle of the Girondists to save the monarch's life was, as is known, useless.

In drawing up a constitution the philosopher thought more of future generations than the present: he considered France as ground cleared of all encumbrance, on which to raise an edifice of government designed in strict accordance to justice and the permanent welfare of mankind: to continue the metaphor, he gave no heed to the more than inequalities of soil,—the gulfs and chasms produced by the earthquake-revolution. His report of the labours of the committee, together with the speech he made on presenting it, was, however, received at first with acclamation, and ordered to be printed. The jacobins disapproved tacitly in the commencement, but by degrees they raised accusations against Condorcet on account of the limited power

which he committed to the people. Underhand disapprobation was spread abroad, but did not become so current, but that the committee of public safety applied to him to draw up a manifesto, which the convention wished to address to every nation and government, with regard to the violation of the law of nations in the persons of four deputies delivered up by Dumouriez to the Austrians: they admired him as a writer, and believed that their cause would be eloquently and well defended by his pen. He wrote with great fervour both against Lafayette and Dumouriez, as having betrayed the cause of their country, and appealed against the conduct of Austria to the interests and sense of justice of every free country.

Even on the approach of the 31st of May, notwithstanding his intimacy with Roland and other Girondists on whom the Mountain party were about to seize, Condorcet continued to be consulted and employed by the committee of public safety. Those of the girondists who, foreseeing the anarchy that must ensue from the triumph of the jacobins, considered their overthrow of more immediate importance than the repulsing the foe from the soil of France, disapproved of Condorcet's working for their enemies: he kept apart from both, while he laboured for the cause of the republic, and remarked that his friends were offended because he did not break with the committee of public safety; and the committee, on the other hand, desired that he should refrain from all intercourse with his friends. "I endeavour," he added, "that each party shall think less of itself and a great deal more of the commonwealth." He began to perceive, however, that it was impossible any longer to use measures of conciliation with Robespierre, but he hoped to restrain him by fear: the latter, however, triumphed. The 31st of May brought with it the decree of arrest of twenty-two Girondists: Condorcet was not among them. He might by silence and prudence have continued for some time longer to sit in the convention; but he saw with indignation the empty benches on which his friends

1793. Ætat. 49.

used to appear, and the growing power of a ferocious oligarchy. He denounced the weakness of the convention, and the tyranny exercised over it by a few ambitious and resolute men, in a letter to his constituents, which was denounced and sent for examination to the committee of public safety. From this moment the jacobins marked him out also for a victim; and the ex-capuchin Chabot denounced him for having written against the new constitution of 1793, which superseded the one he had drawn up: he was summoned to the bar, and a decree of arrest passed against him.

The sanguinary characters and tenets of the leading jacobins had already made him say that no one was sure of six months of life, and he considered the decree of arrest synonymous to a sentence of death. He escaped pursuit, and concealed himself. A generous woman, before unknown to him, and who has never revealed her name to the world, gave him refuge in her house. Denounced on the 3d of October, as Brissot's accomplice, there was no doubt that had he been taken he had shared the fate of the deputies who were guillotined in the month of November; but his place of concealment was not suspected, and he remained in safety till the August of the following year. During this long seclusion, he projected occupation in writing. At first, he meditated detailing the history of his political career; but he reflected that his many labours for his country were irrefragable documents; and, more attached to opinions which he considered pregnant with the welfare of mankind, than to facts which were but the evanescent forms of change, he applied himself to developing his theories in an "Historical Sketch of the Progress of the Human Mind." This is his most celebrated work. It is full of error and even of intolerance; still the clearness of the views, the enthusiasm with which he developes them, the order, precision, and the originality of his theories, render it remarkable. He glances over the past, and argues that each succeeding epoch in the history of mankind has brought

1794. Ætat. 50.

moral improvement and increase of knowledge. There are two views to be taken of human nature. Condorcet insists that the moderns have more knowledge and wisdom and moral power than the ancients. He founds this opinion on the great progress made in scientific truths, and does not hesitate also to oppose French literature to the Greek, as demonstrating the advance of the human intellect in every branch. He compares also the states, wars, and crimes of antiquity with modern society and institutions, and deduces that we are more virtuous, more humane, and more reasonable than preceding generations.

No greater poet has appeared since Homer composed the Iliad,—no more acute philosopher than Aristotle,—no more virtuous character than Socrates, nor sublimer hero than Regulus. By standing on ground reached by the ancients, the mass may climb higher than the masses that went before; but, in making progress, we do not develope more genius and sagacity, but rather less, than those who prepared our way. It is to be doubted, therefore, whether mankind can progress so as to produce specimens superior to Homer, Aristotle, Socrates, Regulus, and many others who adorned antiquity.

But it cannot be doubted, on the other hand, that progress has been made in the general diffusion of knowledge and in the amelioration of the state of society. Philosophers ought, therefore, not to dream of removing the bounds of human perfection, such as we find it among the best, but in bringing the many up to the standard of the few, and causing nations to understand and aim at wisdom and justice with the same ardour as individuals among them have been found to do.

Condorcet developed his views of human perfection while the principle of evil was making giant inroads in France, and blood and terror were the order of the day. Separated from all dear to him, his wife and child, and not daring himself to see the light of heaven,

he did not lose the cheerfulness of his temper, nor mourn vainly over his disasters. In this situation, he wrote an epistle to his wife in the character of a Pole exiled to Siberia in 1768. In this are to be found a couplet since often quoted relative to political victims,—

> "Ils m'ont dit, 'Choisis d'être oppresseur ou victime :'
> J'embrassai le malheur, et leur laissai le crime."

A couplet peculiarly applicable to him who would have been gladly received by the violent party, and had the way open to him to rule, instead of being sacrificed as a victim. He declares in this poem that the anticipation of a violent death did not alter the serenity of his soul, and speaks of the occupations that banished ennui from his solitary place of refuge.

He was soon to lose this shelter: a newspaper fell into his hands in which he read the decree that outlawed him, and denounced the pain of death against any one who should harbour one of the proscribed. He instantly resolved no longer to endanger his generous hostess, — she endeavoured to dissuade him from this fatal step, but in vain: he disguised himself as a countryman, and passed the barriers without a passport. He directed his steps to Sceaux, where he hoped to find refuge in the house of a friend; but he was absent in Paris, nor expected back for three days, and Condorcet was obliged to hide in the neighbouring quarries. After several days spent miserably in this spot, hunger forced him to enter the little inn of Chamont. The avidity with which he ate the food placed before him, and his squalid appearance, drew the attention of a member of the committee of public safety of Sceaux, who happened to be present. He was asked for his passport, and, not having one, was arrested and interrogated. No ready lie hung on the lips of the worshipper of truth, and his unsatisfactory answers, and a Horace found in his pocket with marginal notes in pencil, contributed to reveal his name. He was taken

to Bourg-la-Reine. Such was his state of exhaustion that he fainted at Chatillon, and it was found necessary to mount him on a vine-dresser's horse. On his arrival at Bourg, he was thrown into a dungeon, and forgotten by the jailor for the space of twenty-four hours, when he was found dead; some suppose from the effects of poison; but the probabilities are that he died of exhaustion, hunger, and cold.

The accusation against Condorcet, found in madame Roland's memoirs, where she speaks of his cowardice, cannot be passed over, though we do not give it absolute credence. Her asperity is not measured, though she speaks highly of his intellect. "It may be said," she remarks, "of his understanding and his person that it is a fine essence absorbed in cotton. The timidity that forms the basis of his character, and which he displays even in society, in his countenance and attitudes, does not result from his frame alone, but seems inherent in his soul, and his talents have furnished him with no means of subduing it." There must be both misapprehension and exaggeration in this picture. We find no pusillanimity in his last acts or writings. When he might have saved himself among the Mountain party, he chose to share the fate of the proscribed Girondists. This conduct could spring only from conscientious and noble motives, and a courageous spirit. His numerous political labours give no sign of lukewarmness or tergiversation. They are clear, fervent, and bold with regard to those principles which he held dear. If not profound, nor endowed with the highest order of genius, yet his erudition, ready talent for argument, and admirable memory, give him a high place among men of talent. As a politician, his unflinching war against royalty and aristocracy place him among those politicians who look on mankind as a species, and legislate for them as an equal whole, instead of dividing them into ranks and tribes. His benevolence made him the enemy of oppression, and he expressed this when

he exclaimed, "Peace with cottages, war on castles!" which, had it comprised the history of revolution, the history of France were not stained with its darkest pages. The *sans-culottes* did not spare cottages: they made war on all who were not as ferocious as themselves: Condorcet was among the victims. Benevolence, justice, and attachment to the cause of freedom, remained warm in his heart to the end. Not long before his death, anticipating the speedy close of his existence, he put on paper his last wishes with regard to his daughter. He desired that she should be educated in republican simplicity, and taught to crush every feeling of vengeance towards his destroyers. "Let her know," he wrote, "that none ever entered my heart."

His wife was a woman of great beauty, merit, and talent, and was the author of some philosophical works. She was thrown into prison by Robespierre, but escaped the guillotine, and did not die till 1822, having lived many years in Paris, surrounded by the remnants of the French republicans and philosophers of 1793. His daughter was distinguished for her unpretending virtues and accomplished mind. She became the wife of the celebrated Arthur O'Connor.

MIRABEAU.

1749—1791.

It is impossible to imagine a greater contrast of character than that between the subject of the preceding memoir and the present. Condorcet was a man of warm affections, well regulated mind, and clear precise understanding; his enthusiasm was lighted up by benevolence, and the love of that which he considered truth. He was timid, yet firm; mild, yet resolute. Mirabeau resembled his Italian ancestors, rather than the usual French character. His violent passions governed him, and caused him to govern others through his earnestness and vehemence. His intellect showed itself rather in eloquent bursts than in works of reason, and yet he could apply himself more sedulously than almost any other man when he had an object in view. Profligate, extravagant, and proud, ardent and ambitious, with a warm kind heart, and a mind which erred only under the influence of passion, he passed a life of adversity and oppression, to die at the moment he reached a degree of power which is allotted to few men not born to its inheritance.

The family and progenitors of Mirabeau were all remarkable. He left, in manuscript, a sketch of the family history, and a more detailed life of his grandfather, in which we find singularly displayed the energy, iron will, and pride of the race. The name they originally bore was Arrighetti; the family was Florentine, and driven from that city in 1268, during one of the revolutions occasioned by the quarrels of the Guelphs and Ghibelines. A sentence of perpetual exile was pronounced against Azzo Arrighetti and his descend-

ants, and Azzo took refuge, as many other ghibelines had done, in Provence; and the name of Riquetti is found on various occasions in the history of Marseilles. Those who bore it played at all times a foremost and bold part: they were eagle-eyed men, fierce and headstrong, yet discerning. During the war of the fronde the family was royalist, and was rewarded by a patent of Louis XIV., which erected their estate of Mirabeau into a marquisate. Jean Antoine, grandfather of the subject of this memoir, was one of five sons, who all ran an eccentric, bold, and active career. He passed his younger days in the army, and went through many hairbreadth perils and incredible adventures. The last campaign in which he served was that of the duke de Vendôme, in Italy. He performed prodigies of valour in the battle of Cassano, and was left for dead on the field. Found by the enemy with some slight signs of life, prince Eugene, who knew and esteemed him, sent him, without ransom, to the French camp, that the operation necessary for his preservation might not be delayed. His life was saved, but he survived frightfully mutilated, and a martyr to severe physical suffering to the end of his life. He returned home to find his fortune dilapidated, but never to lose that intrepidity and pride that formed the foundation of the family character. He married, and found in the admirable character of his wife the reward and solace of his sufferings: she had been struck by the heroism of his character; and it is related of her, that some expressions of pity for her being the wife of a cripple, and of a man of a haughty, imperious character, having met her ear, she exclaimed, "Ah! if you knew how happy one is to be able to respect one's husband." He was an admirable landlord and a careful father; and his family flourished under his superintendence, till implicated, through the imprudence of his wife's brother, in the system of Law, he was ruined on the breaking of the bubble. From that time he lived in retirement, bending all his efforts to the paying his debts and repairing his fortune. He died in 1737, at the age of

seventy-one, feared yet beloved by all in connexion with him.

He left three sons: Victor, the eldest, succeeded to the honours and possessions of the house. This man was a strange mixture of good intention and evil doing;—a general philanthropist, and yet the persecutor and enemy of his own family; against various members of which he obtained, at different times, fifty-seven lettres de cachet, nearly a score of which were levelled against his eldest son. He had more vanity than pride, and his haughtiness was unaccompanied by a spirit of justice, yet joined to a perfect conviction that he was always in the right. Implacable towards others, indulgent with regard to himself: hence spring the contradictions observable in his character; we find displayed a mixture of sternness and softness, rancour and good humour. Had he been as severe with himself as others, his whole character had been rigid, but he would have been more just and virtuous: as it was, we find him plastic to the influence of his own passions or vanity, and become gentle and even playful under their influence: whatever jarred with these found him despotic and unforgiving. Thus he grew into a domestic tyrant, and while he ran after popularity in his own person, he disdained and crushed the talents of his son. His literary reputation did not begin till he had passed mid-life; it was founded on "L'Ami des Hommes," a work in five volumes, which, in the midst of great diffuseness and confusion, is yet remarkable for the knowledge it displays in agriculture and statistics, and for many clear and liberal views. His "Theorie de l'Impôt," published in 1760, caused him, through his attack on the financiers of the day, to be imprisoned in the fortress of Vincennes. He wrote many other works on the same species of subjects. It is a curious circumstance that, while he adopted in his publications a bad, inflated, and obscure style, his private letters are witty, gay, and flowing. He had, of course, served in his youth; but disappointment with regard to promotion, combined with his desire

to acquire a literary reputation, caused him to quit the army. He married a young widow of good birth and fortune, Marie Genevieve de Vassam, who had been previously married to the marquis de Saulvebeuf. His desire of shining in literature made him approach Paris, and he bought the estate of Bignon, not far from Nemours, and gave himself up to what he considered his vocation. For many years the disturbances of his domestic life were confined under his own roof. He had a family of eleven children: he was passionately attached to his mother, whom he regarded with a filial veneration that belonged to the old school of manners and piety. Fifteen years changed the scene; quarrels and litigations arose between him and his wife. She was violent and indiscreet; he was tyrannical and unjust; and conjugal infidelity rendered their separation final. Madame de Pailly, a young woman of great beauty, to whom he was attached, installed herself at Bignon, and exercised a most powerful and sinister influence over his conduct towards his family. His wife was indignant: he replied to her resentful representations by the most odious acts of despotism, and conceived a violent hatred against the mother of his children. A scandalous lawsuit was the result; the fortunes of both parties were irreparably injured; and the unfortunate offspring were in a worse situation than orphans; — hated by their father, — not daring to see their mother, who was shut up in a convent, — treated with the utmost severity on one hand, and without resource in maternal affection on the other. Added to his matrimonial dissensions were the attacks made on him in his quality of author. "L'Ami des Hommes," as the marquis de Mirabeau was commonly called from his book, carried all the impetuosity, self-sufficiency, and haughtiness of his race into his literary career; and it may be supposed that that became as stormy as his father's had been on the field of battle. His confidence in his own talents and powers was unbounded: he never attributed the misfortunes that

pursued him to any error or rashness of his own; he looked on them as the dispensation of Providence, or as arising from the folly and injustice of his fellow-creatures. No hesitation, no doubt with regard to himself, ever entered his mind; every thing was sacrificed to his opinions, his convictions, his mistaken sense of his duties. He was blinded, as a French biographer observes, by the most deceptive of all fanaticisms — that of his own infallibility. The passions that in another he would have regarded as crimes, he looked on as virtues in himself: he could never perceive the shadow of right or justice in any cause or views at variance with his own. Such was the father who became the bitter enemy and persecutor of a son, endowed with all the genius, passions, and faults of his race.

Gabriel Honoré was the fifth child of the marquis: through the previous death of a brother in the cradle, he was, at the time of his birth, the only son. He was born at Bignon. He came into the world with teeth, and was an enormously large infant. It was remarked of him, that, destined to become the most turbulent and active of men, he was born with a twisted foot; and, gifted with extraordinary eloquence, he was tongue-tied. At three years of age he had the small-pox, and his mother, who dabbled in medicine, making some experiments on the pustules, the result was that he remained frightfully seared and marked. His father was evidently deeply mortified, and wrote to his brother, "Your nephew is as ugly as if he were Satan's." His other children being remarkably handsome, this circumstance became more disastrous to the sufferer. The boy, however, early showed talent, which was nurtured by an excellent tutor, and less judiciously overlooked by his father, who resolved to give him an education of unequalled excellence — that is, one of perpetual restraint, reprimand, and chastisement. We have interesting details of his infancy and youth, in extracts from a series of letters which passed between the marquis and

his brother.* The bailli de Mirabeau was entered by his father into the order of knights of Malta in his infancy. He served in the French navy for the space of thirty-one years, when he retired without recompence, except such as he derived from a high reputation. He was a proud, austere, and resolute man, possessing at the same time extreme piety, great goodness, and unblemished integrity of character, together with a foundation of good sense that contrasts with his brother's intemperate sallies. Uncompromising even to roughness, he was ill suited to a court, while his bravery and sound understanding fitted him for public service. Proud of the antiquity of his race; openly disdainful of the new-created noblesse; frank, upright, but somewhat discontented, as he well might be, at the small reward his services received; yet at the same time too haughty to wait obsequiously on the great, or even to take the measures necessary to refresh their memory, he passed the latter part of his life in retirement. He devoted his fortune to his brother's service, whom he respected as the head of the family, and regarded with warm fraternal affection. A correspondence subsisted between the one, living either at Paris or Bignon, and the other, who was serving his country at a distance, or established at Mirabeau, which discloses the secrets of the family, and unveils the motives and passions that swayed the conduct of the marquis. The bailli was deeply interested in the child who was to transmit the family name, and, being at the time of the boy's birth governor of Guadaloupe, wrote earnestly home for information with regard to him. The child early developed quickness of intellect and turbulence of temper, joined to kindness of heart. Poisson, his tutor, was a

* These extracts form the best part of the "Memoirs of Mirabeau," by M. Lucas Montigny, his adopted, or, rather, his natural son, — a work of zeal and labour, but undigested, diffuse, and ill-judged. Had the author published a selection from these letters, which were placed in his hands by the family, we should have an invaluable work. As it is, we are often as much tantalised by what is omitted, as edified by what is given, of the correspondence. When the extracts from it cease, the pages of the memoirs lose all their charm and value: they degenerate into little else than extracts from newspapers, and vapid discussions by the author.

careful but severe guide, and if ever he was softened, the marquis stepped in to chastise. Soon, too soon, the paternal scoldings and punishments became angry reprimands and constant disapprobation, which verged into hatred. These feelings were increased by the imprudences and vivacity of the boy, the misjudged quarrels of the mother, the artful manœuvres of madame de Pailly, and the bitter hatred conceived by an old servant named Gervin, who, from some unknown cause, exercised extraordinary influence over the marquis. The chief fault particularised by the father was the boy's habitual untruths. A love of or indifference to truth is one of the characteristics with which human beings are born. The former may be cultivated, the latter checked, but the propensities do not the less remain; and it is the most painful discovery that a parent can make, to find that his child is not by natural instinct incapable of falsehood. This innate and unfortunate vice, joined to the boy's wildness and heedlessness, caused the father to write of him in severe terms, scarcely suited to his childish years. "He seems to me," he writes, "in addition to all the baseness of his natural character, a mere fool, an unconquerable maniac. He attends a number of excellent masters; and as every one, from his confessor to his playmate, are so many watchers, who tell me every thing, I discern the nature of the heart, and do not believe that he can come to any good." The first master, Poisson, set over him, however, took a liking to the boy, and praised his prodigious memory and good heart. The father, instead of being pleased, grew angry. He declared that he would now be utterly spoilt, and took him out of his hands to place him in those of an abbé Choquart, a severe disciplinarian, who was bid not to spare punishment. The severity of the marquis may be judged by this one circumstance, that taking his son from a tutor whom he loved, and placing him in a school to which he was sent as to a prison, he insisted that he should go by another name. "I did not choose," he writes, "that an illustrious name should

be disgraced on the benches of a school of correction, and I caused him to be entered as Pierre Buffière. 1764. Ætat. 15. My gentleman struggled, wept, argued in vain. I bid him win my name, which I would only restore when he deserved it." Had the father been just the youth would soon have regained his affections and name. The abbé Choquart, at first severe with his pupil, soon became attached to and proud of him. His progress was astonishing, his memory prodigious. The dead and living languages, mathematics, drawing, and music, and various manly exercises, occupied him by turns, and he distinguished himself in all. In the midst of the marquis's vituperations we find no absolute facts. He calls his son lying by nature, base, and so vicious that the worst consequences are to be apprehended: this is carried so far that, when he mentions that his masters applaud and his comrades love him, he adds that the boy ought to be smothered, if it were only for his powers of cajolery and fascination.

This severity frightened but did not conquer the youth. He worked hard to obtain his father's approbation; but indiscretions came between to widen the breach. Perpetually in expectation of some degrading or excessive punishment, he lived in a state of excitement, and even terror, ill fitted to inspire the gentleness and repose of spirit which is the best ingredient of honour and virtue. As he grew older his turbulence became more dangerous; and his father, considering it necessary to tame him by increased hardships, placed him in the army. "I am going to send him," he writes, "as volunteer, to the strictest and most laborious military school. A man, a chip of the old times, the marquis de Lambert, has founded one in his regiment. He pretends that the exclusive atmosphere of honour, and a hard and cold moral regimen, can restore beings the most vitiated even by nature. I have requested him to name as Mentor an officer who, not from reason and deduction, but from instinct, should have a disgust and natural scorn for all baseness. I have named Gervin as his other

Mentor, and the only servant-master of this young man. Severity will cost me nothing, for with him it is my right and my duty." The perpetual recurrence to the accusation of baseness affords some excuse for the father's inveteracy; yet it was certainly ill judged to set a servant over a proud aspiring youth as master, and this servant, who hated him, was one of the chief engines of perpetuating the marquis's bad opinion. However, by placing him beyond the paternal control, under the impartial jurisdiction of a regiment, the young man had a chance of being fairly treated, and the consequence was that his good conduct was acknowledged and a brevet rank promised him. He was not allowed to reap any advantage: his father kept him so wholly without money that he incurred a few debts; he lost, also, four louis in play, a vice to which he showed no predilection in after life, and we may therefore judge that this trifling loss was accidental. His father's wrath flamed out. "He is cast," he wrote to his brother, "in the mould of his maternal race, and would devour twenty inheritances and twelve kingdoms if he could lay his hands on them. But I can endure as little as I like of that species of evil, and a close and cool prison will soon moderate his appetite and thin him down." 1767. Ætat. 18.

Added to this error was the unfortunate circumstance of an amour, the first outbreak of his passionate nature on emerging from boyhood, in which he was the successful rival of his superior officer, who thus became his enemy, and joined with the father to crush the young man's spirit. Mirabeau, in after years, always spoke with great bitterness of M. de Lambert's discipline. He escaped from it on this occasion, and took refuge in Paris with his father's intimate friend, the duke de Nivernois. His brother-in-law, husband of his sister, the marquis du Saillant, mediated between him and his father: he defended himself against accumulated accusations. His father speaks of his defence as a mass of falsehood and ingratitude: he meditated, or, rather, was instigated, to send him to the Dutch colonies in India, but milder

thoughts prevailed;—he would not kill, but only tame, as with blows, the fiery-spirited boy; so he caused him to be imprisoned in the fortress of the Isle de Rhé; and the youth felt that all the world was his enemy, and the chief his harsh implacable parent. In his eloquent letter to the marquis, written some years after, in the prison of Vincennes, he alludes with bitterness to this period of his existence.

"I may say," he writes, "that from my earliest years, and on my first entrance into life, I enjoyed few marks of your kindness; that you treated me with rigour before I could have merited it; and yet that you might have soon perceived that my natural impetuosity was excited, instead of repressed, by such treatment; that it was as easy to soften as to irritate me; that I yielded to the former, and rebelled against the latter. I was not born to be a slave; and, in a word, that, while Lambert ruined, Viomenil would have preserved me. Allow me also to remind you, that, before you restored me to your favour, you confessed in one of your letters that you had been on the point of sending me to one of the Dutch colonies. This made a profound impression, and influenced prodigiously the rest of my life. What had I done at eighteen to merit a fate the thought of which makes me tremble even now?—I had loved."

In his prison, Mirabeau acquired the friendship of the governor, whose mediation only added to his father's irritation. He was, however, induced to liberate him, and permit him to join an expedition to Corsica. He was entered as sub-lieutenant of foot in the regiment of Lorraine. The same mixture of wild passion, unwearied study, and eager aspiration for distinction, marked this period. He wrote a history of Corsica; he fabricated an itinerary of the island, founded on his personal inquiries and perambulations; the manuscript, the voluminousness of which testified his industry, were deemed of such value by the Corsicans themselves, that they desired its publication; but it was

destroyed by the marquis. In addition, he studied his profession — he felt a vocation for a military life — the aspect of danger calmed his fiery spirit, and he was ambitious of glory — he dedicated all his time to the study of tactics, and declares that there was no book in any language, living or dead, that treated of the art of war that he had not read at this period, making, as he went on, voluminous extracts. In after times he wrote to his sister — "I deceive myself greatly, or I was born for a military life; for in war alone I feel cool, calm, gay, and without impetuosity, and I am sensible that my character grows exalted."

On returning from Corsica, he was allowed to visit his uncle, the bailli, at Mirabeau, and soon acquired the favour of this unprejudiced man, who was astonished by his talents, his industry, and his genius. His heart warmed, and the praises that overflowed had some effect on his father, still distrustful, still fearful of showing favour. The first mark of kindness which he gave was to insist that his son should throw aside all his favourite pursuits, and dedicate himself to political and agricultural economy, studying them in the works which he had himself written. Mirabeau, per force, obeyed, and thus somewhat propitiated his parent, so that he consented to see him during a visit he paid to Provence. He put the young man to hard trials, and made him labour indefatigably, preaching to him the while, and forcing political economy down his throat. The marquis was averse to his following the military profession, and by turning him from it plunged him in adversity. The excessive activity of Mirabeau's mind, and his physical vigour, could be satisfied in no other career: his exuberance of spirits and unwearied strength rendered every other vocation tame and trivial; however, he laboured at various occupations devised for him by his father, and was rewarded, at the earnest solicitation of all the relations, by being restored to his name — he having for some years gone by that of Pierre Buffière. His father was so far won by his manifestations of talent as to permit

him to visit Paris, and pay his court at Versailles:—
1771. "He behaves very well," the marquis writes; "his
Ætat. manners are respectful without servility—easy, but not
22. familiar. The courtiers look on him as half mad, but say that he is cleverer than any of them, which is not discreet on his part. I do not intend that he shall live there, nor follow, like others, the trade of robbing or cheating the king: he shall neither haunt the dirty paths of intrigue, nor slide on the ice of favour; but he must learn what is going on: and if I am asked why I, who never would frequent Versailles, allow him to go so young, I reply that 'he is made of other clay.' For the rest, as, for 500 years, Mirabeaus, who were never like the rest of the world, have been tolerated, he also will be endured, and he will not alter the reputation of the race."

This gleam of paternal favour was soon clouded over. Mirabeau himself accuses those around his father of inspiring him with distrust; but there was something in the young man's character that jarred with the father's, and produced a perpetual state of irritation and dissatisfaction. The self-will, pedantry, economy, and self-sufficiency of the marquis were in perpetual contradiction with the genius, activity, recklessness, the winning frankness and plausible fascinations of his son. In vain the youth transacted some troublesome business for his father with diligence and success — in vain he entered into his agricultural projects — the father writes bitterly, "His infancy was monstrous, his adolescence turbulent, and both seem the worthy exordium of his life, which is now a mixture of indiscretion, misconduct, and garrulity; and at the same time so turbulent, so presumptuous, and so heedless, that the enterprise of saving him from the dangers which his years and his character present, is enough to fatigue and deter thirty Mentors, instead of one." At length, tired of the young man's society, and urged by those about him, he sent him (December, 1771) to Mirabeau, to endeavour to pacify and regulate the dissensions sub-

sisting among the tenants of the marquis, which his usual agents were incapable of rectifying. The young man fulfilled his task with zeal and ability: he became known and liked in Provence, and his success inspired the idea of settling him in marriage — so to calm down his turbulence in domestic life: his father had before entertained this project, believing that a woman of good sense would exercise the happiest influence over his mind.

The young lady pointed out was an heiress. A number of men of higher pretensions than himself on the score of fortune aspired to her hand. This circumstance, and the avarice of his father, who acted with his usual parsimony, at first deterred Mirabeau; but, urged on by the marquis's sarcasms, he exerted himself to overcome all difficulties and succeeded, though the measures he took, which compromised the reputation of the young lady, were highly reprehensible, and naturally excited the disgust and disapprobation of his father. Marie Emilie de Covet, only daughter of the marquis de Marignane, was then eighteen: she was a lively brunette, scarcely to be called pretty, but agreeable, witty, and superficially clever. Although an heiress, she enjoyed a very slender fortune during the life of her father; and the marquis, while he entailed the family estate on his son, allowed him scarcely any income, and advanced him nothing for the expences of his nuptials. This was the worst sort of marriage that Mirabeau could have made. Marrying in his own province a girl of good family, and surrounded by the *éclat* that attends an heiress, he was led to desire to make an appearance suitable to his name and his father's fortune. He incurred debts. Madame de Sevigné remarks that there is nothing so expensive as want of money. Debt always begets debt. Mirabeau was constitutionally careless with regard to expense. His father lent him the chateau of Mirabeau to live in: he found the ancestral residence as furnished by his progenitors; and, obliged to make some repairs, he went to the other extreme,

1772. Ætat. 23.

and fitted up the apartments destined for his wife with splendour. False pride caused him to load her with presents, and to dress her richly, in spite of her remonstrances. At the same time he had projects for the improvement of the culture of the estate, the proceeds of which, he believed, would cover all his expenses. His father still pursued the degrading plan of employing hirelings as spies over him. These men, to cover their own peculations, represented that he was selling the furniture of the chateau and injuring the property. Every plan Mirabeau formed to pay his debts, as the best foundation of retrenchment, was opposed by his father. Feeling the storm about to break, and resolved to proceed no further on the road to ruin, he commenced a system of rigid economy; but his father, deaf to all explanations, excited by the representations of his servants, and exasperated in the highest degree, obtained a lettre de cachet, and used it to order his son to quit the chateau, and to confine himself in the little town of Manosque. This sort of confinement was ill calculated to appease the spirit of Mirabeau, who ought rather to have been thrown into an arduous career, so to fill and occupy his mind. At Manosque he was reduced to a scanty income of about 50*l.* a year, to support himself, his wife, and child; his only employment was study, to which he gave himself up with ardour, but it was not sufficient to tame and engross him. He wrote here his "Essay on Despotism," a work full of passion and vigour, into which he poured his own impatience of control. He left behind him no good reputation among the people of Manosque; and, if his wife afterwards refused to join him, she had the excuse that his behaviour as a husband was such as to disgust any young lady of feeling and delicacy. His own conduct did not, however, prevent him from being jealous himself, and this passion, awakened toward his wife, renewed, by the actions it occasioned, the persecutions of his father.

A girlish and innocent correspondence had been car-

ried on by his wife before her marriage with the chevalier de Gassaud. This, and other circumstances, combined to excite jealousy in the mind of the husband; a duel became imminent; till, pacified by the representations of the young man's family, and consideration for the reputation of Madame de Mirabeau, he became willing to listen to an explanation. The previous scandal, however, threatened to break an advantageous marriage, on foot between the chevalier and the daughter of the marquis de Tourette. Mirabeau, resolving not to be generous by halves, left Manosque secretly, and repaired with all possible speed to the town of Grasse: he pleaded the cause of the chevalier with such earnest eloquence that the family dismissed their objections, and he hastened to return to his place of exile.

Most unfortunately he met on his way back the baron de Villeneuve-Moans. This man had, a short time before, grossly insulted his sister, the marquise de Cabris. The brother demanded satisfaction, which being refused, he now, meeting him by accident, struck him. The baron proceeded legally against him, and thus his evasion from his place of exile came to light. The implacable father demanded a stricter imprisonment; and Mirabeau, taken from his wife and his infant son, then dangerously ill, was conducted to the chateau of If, a dismal fortress, built on a naked rock by the sea-shore, near Marseilles. He was here at the demand of his father, interdicted all visits and correspondence; and the marquis also took the pains to write to the commander of the castle, Dallegre, exaggerating the faults of his son, and blackening his character; but here, as before in the Isle de Rhe, the commander was won by the frankness, courage, and fascinating qualities of his prisoner, and wrote to the marquis to entreat his liberation. "All the province knows," he wrote, "that you have made the freedom of the count de Mirabeau depend on the report I shall make of his good conduct. Receive, then, the most authentic attestation that, since the count has been confined at the chateau d'If, he has

1774. Ætat. 25.

not given me, nor any other person, the slightest cause of complaint, and has always conducted himself admirably. He has sustained with extreme moderation the altercations I have sometimes entered into for the purpose of trying his temper, and he will carry away with him the esteem, friendship, and consideration of every one here." Madame de Mirabeau made a journey to Bignon to intercede with his father, who at length explained that his purpose was to try his son ; that he meant to keep him yet longer in the chateau of If; and if, by a miracle, he committed no new fault, he should be transferred to some other fortress where his perseverance in a good course should continue to be put to the test, till by degrees he should be restored to his privileges of husband and father. When we consider that Mirabeau really filled these sacred functions, and that his sole crime towards his father was debt, — a crime the consequences of which visited him only, and visited him severely, — we revolt from the insolent tyranny exer-
1775 cised against him. In pursuance of this plan, he was
Ætat. transferred to the fortress of Joux, near Pontarlier, and
26. placed in the hands of the governor, count Saint-Mauris. He submitted to this new exile among the mountains of Jura, away from his wife and child, from every friend and connection, with entire resignation ; still hoping, by patience and good conduct, to vanquish the prejudices and gain the good will of his father.

Until now we appear to detail a series of cruel and causeless persecutions. The conduct of Mirabeau, tried by the laws of morality, had been vicious, but not criminal, and was punished as the latter. He had, to a certain degree, redeemed his extravagance, by living for a considerable period within the limits of an income scarcely sufficient to afford the necessaries of life. He had obtained the favourable attestation of the man under whose guard he was placed : it was evident to every one, except his inexorable father, that the husband ought to be restored to the young wife, already suspected of indiscretion — the father to his child ; a

young man of ambition and talents, to the enjoyment of liberty and of the privileges of his birth.

Mirabeau painted his feelings eloquently in a letter to his uncle, dated from the fortress of Joux, 22d of August, 1775. "Ought I," he writes, "to be for ever excluded from a career in which my conduct and endeavours, aided by your counsels, might give me the means of one day becoming useful and known. Times are mending, and ambition is permitted. Do you believe that the emulation that animates me ought to remain sterile, and that, at the age of twenty-six, your nephew is incapable of any good? Do not believe it; deliver me; deign to deliver me: save me from the frightful agitation in which I live, and which may destroy the effects produced on me by reflection and adversity. Believe me, that there are men whom it is necessary to occupy, and that I am of that number. The activity which accomplishes all things, and without which nothing is achieved, becomes turbulent, and may become dangerous, if left without object or employment." His father was insensible to these representations, and, although the pretence of his continued imprisonment was, that he should regain by degrees the paternal favour, the marquis's letters prove that it was his heartfelt wish to drive his son to extremities; and he too fatally succeeded.

Mirabeau had hitherto wasted his ardent nature on vulgar amours; he had never felt real love. Had he been allowed to follow an active career, it is probable that love, in an absorbing and despotic form, had never governed him. Driven into solitude, separated from all the ties of nature, friendless and persecuted, his heart in an unfortunate hour became inflamed by a passion that sealed his ruin. The fortress of Joux is situated in the neighbourhood of Pontarlier; the only family of note resident in that town was that of De Monnier. Madame de Monnier belonged to a family of the name of Ruffey, distinguished for a piety carried to bigotry, and a parental severity, that caused them to devote several children to a monastic life. Sophie was married at eigh-

teen to M. de Monnier, who was more than fifty years her senior. She joined to gentleness of disposition and sweetness of temper great decision and ardour of character. The young people became acquainted. She saw only the bright side of Mirabeau's character; and, while she consoled him in his misfortunes, she became entangled by the fascinations of passion. It is impossible to conceive a more unnatural position, than that of a girl sacrificed according to the old customs of France. Sophie de Ruffey was taken from the nursery, and given, even without her consent being asked, to a morose, avaricious, decrepit old man; who only married to annoy his daughter. He was unamiable in all the relations of life; and the home of the ardent girl was dull, and yet full of harassing cares. She had no children; none of the sweet hopes and expectations that ought to attend opening life; and, while she devoted herself to an existence full of ennui and annoyance, she reaped no reward in the kindness and confidence of her husband. It is not strange that, placed in this position, her heart should be open to impression, and before she knew her danger she was in love. The enthusiasm and fervour of her disposition caused her to exalt her lover into the idol of her imagination. Misled by passion, she began to regard her tie to her septuagenarian husband as criminal—fidelity and devotion to her lover as a paramount duty.

Mirabeau knew better what life was. He felt love for the first time in all its truth and intensity, and he trembled at the prospect. According to a wise poet,

> "Love is too young to know what conscience is;
> Yet who knows not that conscience is born of love?"

and thus he, who hitherto had looked on love as a mere sensual enjoyment, and who, accustomed to occupy himself in arduous study for the third of each day, had little leisure to employ in pursuits of empty gallantry, became aware of the absorbing nature of real passion, and to fear the misery that must ensue from its indulgence. He wrote letters of eloquent supplication, imploring to be removed

from a neighbourhood which he found so dangerous: his father treated his appeals with contempt; he then wrote to his wife a long letter, entreating her to join him with their child, feeling that the presence of those who were united to him by such sacred ties would check his pursuit, and at once crush the affection of her he loved. Madame de Mirabeau was a frivolous and weak woman: a separation of more than a year had alienated her from her husband, whose conduct had been far from irreproachable, and she replied to his supplications by a dry note of a few lines, in which she treated him as out of his wits. Still Mirabeau struggled against the seductions of love, and had the unfortunate pair been treated, not to say with kindness, but with prudence, all had been well. It so happened that the governor, count de Saint-Mauris, who was nearly seventy years of age, was also in love with madame de Monnier, who had received his declarations with the disdain which they deserved. His rage knew no bounds, when he perceived the success of his prisoner. He roused the suspicions of the husband, and, the better to wreak his revenge, took advantage of his knowledge of a promissory note for a small sum, which Mirabeau, left in a state of destitution by his father, had been obliged to grant to procure necessary raiment, to report him to the implacable marquis as incurring new debts, and so obtained a fresh order to confine him strictly in the fortress of Joux. Mirabeau learnt the fate awaiting him, and finding that his system of resignation had availed him nothing, and shuddering at the prospect of a dungeon guarded by a malignant rival, escaped from his surveillance, and secreted himself at Pontarlier.

His position demanded the most careful reflection. His angry father spared no pains to discover his place of refuge: he wrote to Saint-Mauris, telling him to prepare a "healthy and dry, but well barred and bolted dungeon for his son; and not to permit him the slightest communication by writing or in person with any one." Hopeless of softening the marquis, Mirabeau

wrote to Malesherbes, the minister so distinguished in France for benevolence and liberality; but Malesherbes mediated in vain with his father, and, at length, told Mirabeau that he had but one resource, which was to withdraw from his country, to enter foreign service, and pursue the career of arms, for which his birth, talents, and bravery, fitted him. Mirabeau was averse to renouncing his country: again and again he applied by letters, written either by himself or mediating friends, to his father, who at last replied, that he renounced having any thing to do with him — told him that no country was so foreign to him as his own; and, banishing him for ever from his family, dissolved all natural and social ties that still held his son to France.

Treated with this haughty cruelty, Mirabeau could not avoid contrasting the marks of hatred and scorn, which he received from every other, with the devoted love of her who was ready to sacrifice all to him. But, though conjugal fidelity was held in slight regard and little practised in France in those days, the carrying off a married woman was treated as a crime to be punished by death or perpetual imprisonment, and Mirabeau could not yet consent to lose himself or his mistress utterly. M. de Monnier, informed by Saint-Mauris of the attachment of his wife, surrounded her by spies, and treated her with the utmost severity. By the advice of Mirabeau she left her husband, and took refuge with her own family at Dijon. She found no kindness there; her angry father refused to see her — her mourning mother caused her to be strictly watched — her brother and sister taunted and insulted her. She was driven to despair, and declared to her lover that she would destroy herself, if by no other means she could escape the cruelty shown by all around. For several months Mirabeau combated the passion rooted in his own heart, and that which drove madame de Monnier to desperation. He had escaped from France and gained the frontier: he might easily have now entered on a military career in a foreign state, but devoted love bound him to Sophie, who was on the

eve of being imprisoned in a convent, and who, revolting from such tyranny, believed that every genuine duty and affection of life bound her to him she loved, and had become resolved to devote her life to him. After much hesitation, many months spent in wanderings in Switzerland, dogged close the while by emissaries of his father, whose pursuit he baffled, and whose strength and patience he wearied out; after many fruitless endeavours to avoid the catastrophe, the hour at last arrived, when Mirabeau, cast off by father, wife, and country, doomed to exile and a career dependent on his industry, and feeling in the affection of his mistress his only solace in this accumulation of disaster, and assured also that, if he deserted her, Sophie, driven to desperation, would destroy herself, consented to their flight. She escaped from her husband's house and joined him at Verrières Suisses, whence, after a fortnight's delay, they proceeded to Holland. On the 7th of October they arrived at Amsterdam, and took a lodging at the house of a tailor, where, destitute and friendless, Mirabeau was at once forced to earn their daily bread, and to conceal his name and identity, so to escape further persecution. He sought for occupation in translating for a bookseller. After some delay he obtained work from Rey, and was able to earn a louis a-day by means of extreme hard labour. From six in the morning till nine in the evening he was at his desk: his only recreation was an hour of music: but the lovers were happy together. Sophie, fallen from a life of ease to one of privation, yet regarded it no sacrifice to exchange annoyance and ennui, though surrounded by luxury, for seclusion with one whose ardent affection, brilliant imagination, and entire confidence, could easily supply every void, and fill her existence with interest and delight. 1776. Ætat. 27.

The social law that bound Sophie to her husband was nefarious and unnatural; but in breaking it she devoted herself to all the misfortunes which attend an attachment not sanctioned by society: for a time love may gild

the scene, and, as was the case with Sophie, conscience be satisfied that she had a right to exchange her forced ties with a decrepit old husband, to whom she owed nothing, for a union with the man of her choice. But the world and its laws dog the heels of a felicity they condemn, and are sure at last to hunt down their prey. M. de Monnier proceeded against his wife and her lover in a court of law, and on the 10th May, 1777, sentence was passed on Mirabeau for rape and seduction. He was condemned to be decapitated in effigy and to pay 40,000 livres as damages to the husband; while Sophie was condemned to be confined for life in a house of refuge established at Besançon, to be shaven and branded in common with the other prisoners, who were girls of depraved life, and to lose all the advantages of her marriage settlement. Such was the severity of the old French laws against matrimonial infidelity — laws which permitted the most depraved state of society ever known, and only made themselves felt in cases of exception, when the most severe moralist would find excuses for, and be inclined to pardon the errors of passion, which society punished only because the victims refused to practise the hypocrisy which would have been accepted as atonement.

The marquis de Mirabeau at first rejoiced in the catastrophe which exiled his son for ever from the soil of France, and was willing to forget his existence. Not so the family of Sophie: her mother, induced by mixed feelings of religion, resentment, and even affection, was eager to obtain possession of the person of her daughter, to separate her from her lover, and induce her by severity or persuasion to return to her husband. Through an imprudence the place of their retreat was discovered, and the marquis writes to his brother, "He is in Holland, and lives on the earnings of his pen. De Brugnierres is setting out to fulfil a bargain made with madame de Ruffey, to seize her mad daughter, for which he is to be paid 100 louis. I have profited by the occasion and made the same arrangement — to be paid only if the man is taken to his destination."

Mirabeau and his companion had lived eight months at Amsterdam: they had made friends; and some among these told them that their retreat was discovered, and an arrest impending. At first a treaty had been commenced to induce Mirabeau to place madame de Monnier in the hands of the French authorities, offering money and liberty as his reward: he spurned these propositions and prepared to fly with her to America; yet still the lovers were too secure, and delayed for the sake of obtaining a sum of money. The very night on which they were to depart they were arrested. Sophie, who, till the crisis arrived, was calm and serene, though serious and resolved, was seized by despair: she resolved to destroy herself. Mirabeau was her stay: he gained the goodwill of the men about them, revealed his fears, and obtained the consent of M. le Noir, lieutenant-general of police, to see her once, and afterwards to correspond with her. His persuasions were all powerful, and she consented to live. She was taken to Paris and imprisoned in a sort of asylum for women, while Mirabeau was shut up in the donjon of Vincennes. At first no gleam of hope lighted on the prisoners: all that bound them to existence was the correspondence they kept up with each other, and the fact that Sophie was about to give birth to a child. The letters that Mirabeau wrote to his mistress from his prison fell afterwards into the hands of a man who published them: certainly Mirabeau would have been the last person in the world to have permitted the publication of letters intended for the eye of his mistress alone, and drawn from a nature whose paramount vice was excess of passion, now wrought to intensity by close imprisonment and enforced separation from her whom he ardently loved. These letters are in parts grossly indelicate and unfit for perusal; but they display the burning ardour of his nature, and the excess of his attachment for the unhappy woman whom he had drawn into participation in his wretched destiny. For nearly two years these letters are stamped with a hopelessness, often carried to desperation.

1777. Ætat. 28.

"There is no peace with my implacable enemies," he writes, at one time; "there will be none except in the tomb. No pity can enter their souls of gall: as barbarous as they are unjust, their commiseration will never yield that which their iniquity denies. It is too much! I know not whether, proscribed by that destiny which permits guilt to triumph, and innocence to suffer, I am destined to die of despair, or to merit my fate by the perpetration of crime, but the agony that precedes the catastrophe endures too long, and I feel transports of indignation and hatred, such as never before had influence over my soul." Again he writes, "The rules of this house are so excessively, I had almost said so atrociously severe, that I must perish if I remain longer. No species of society is permitted: the turnkeys who wait on us are forbidden to remain in our cells, or to speak to us — we have but one hour of exercise out of the twenty-four. Alone with sorrow — no literary occupation — few and bad books — interminable delays in the fulfilment of our most innocent wishes and our simplest wants — no musical instruments — in a word, no recreation — every consolation denied by a barbarous tyranny, such is but a feeble sketch of our situation. A man who has any soul or mind cannot resist such a mode of life, in which his talents, his acquirements, and his most praiseworthy sentiments, instead of solacing, must produce his ruin."

As a proof of the energy and fortitude of Mirabeau's soul, it must be mentioned, that frequent opportunities of escape presented themselves, but he declared that he would not desert Sophie and unlink his fate from hers; nor renounce all hope of being restored to his station and rights in his country. While he strung his soul to endure, his very strength of purpose gave additional force to his hatred of tyranny. He, as being the victim of his family, and not a state prisoner, was in the sequel permitted many indulgences not allowed to any other. Books, materials for writing — connivance at his correspondence — more time allowed to his walks

— the visits of some of the superiors, who became his friends — such were the licences permitted him; but we find him complaining that he was forbidden to sing in his cell, and detailing the frightful physical sufferings, to which he was the victim through confinement. A state prisoner would have been treated with yet greater rigour; and the sense of this, and the knowledge that others whose crimes were often their virtues, were his fellow-sufferers, lighted up a horror of despotism in his heart, which made him ever after its determined and bitter enemy.

With all his energy and fortitude, Mirabeau bore up with difficulty under the hardships of his dungeon: at one time, he resolved on suicide, and was saved only by the remonstrances of M. le Noir, whose kindness to his prisoner was zealous and unalterable. Consenting to live, he found study his sole resource, and he dedicated himself with ardour, and to the injury of his health, to his pen. His works during his imprisonment were numerous. He translated the "Kisses" of Johannes Secundus, with abundant notes, containing extracts from all the erotic poets of antiquity. He wrote a treatise on mythology; an essay on the French language; another on ancient and modern literature; works undertaken for the instruction and amusement of madame de Monnier. His "Essay on Lettres-de-cachet and State Prisons" belongs also to this period.

His father, meanwhile, felt no compunction, no doubt as to the justice of his conduct; no pity softened his heart, nor did he by any notice of his son answer his many supplications. He declared that, having searched and purified his heart each day before God, he is only the more determined to persist; and the resolution in which he was to persist was that of suffering his son to languish and perish in his dungeon. A circumstance happened, however, to change this resolve. His grandson, the only son of Gabriel-Honoré, died. The mother resided with her child at her father's chateau. She was surrounded by relations,

Oct. 8. 1778. Ætat. 29.

collateral heirs to her fortune if she died childless: some suspicion arose that these persons had poisoned the boy; he was five years old, and of great promise from the sweetness and docility of his disposition. The grandfather was deeply afflicted: he could not doubt the uprightness of his conduct nor the purity of his motives, so blinded was he by the passions that urged him to persecute his family; but he was led to doubt the support of Providence on which he had heretofore relied. From this moment he began to meditate the liberation of his son. He was not induced by justice nor compassion, but by pride: he could not endure that the name of Mirabeau should be extinguished. "I reflected," he wrote afterwards to his brother, "for a long time. It is certain that, if my grandson had not died, I had insisted on the maintenance of the promise made me, to keep the father in prison, and even to destroy all trace of him. But, after the death of our poor little Victor, I found that you felt as I did with regard to the extinction of our race; for, however one may argue, however one may submit and resign one's self, a feeling once entertained cannot be effaced." The marquis, however, proceeded fair and softly in his design. Resolved both to punish and to tame his son, he issued fresh orders, that he should be allowed no indulgences; but he put several persons in action, through whose suggestions Mirabeau commenced a correspondence with his uncle: the letters were shown to his father, and some were addressed to the latter; but he was not moved either by the protestations or representations they contained to move faster or to alter his plan. In pursuance of this, he declared that the liberation of his son depended on the intercession of his wife. The countess de Mirabeau accordingly wrote to her father-in-law, requesting that her husband should be set free; and Mirabeau, hearing this, was touched by the generosity of her act. From the moment, indeed, that hope gleamed on him of softening his father's resolves, he became much

more humble, and very ready to acknowledge his faults. Sophie, also, with that generous ardour of disposition that was at once the cause and excuse of her actions, wrote to the marquis, taking all the fault of their attachment and flight on herself. Even the old economist felt the nobleness of her conduct.

The affair, however, still lagged. M. de Marignane detested his son-in-law. It was the interest of the relations around to prevent the reunion of husband and wife: the countess was a weak and timid woman; she resolved never to disobey, she feared to offend her father; and besides, living as she did, in the midst of ease, luxury, pleasure, and freedom, she had no wish to return to a life of penury with a husband whom she no longer loved. Often, therefore, while receiving harsh letters from his uncle, Mirabeau was ready to sink under multiplied delays. He tried to cheat time by occupation; he gave himself up to study — he learnt Greek, English, Italian, Spanish — translated a portion of Tacitus — and this, in spite of failing eyes and ruined health.

Another event, sad to a parent's heart, and deeply lamented by Mirabeau, happened to facilitate his freedom. His child, the daughter of Sophie, died of a fever of dentition: this event acted as a spur to the marquis. He permitted his only child with whom he was on friendly terms, madame du Saillant, to correspond with her brother, dictating her letters, and reading the replies — he allowed (for no step was taken except by his permission, and even suggestion,) his son-in-law, M. du Saillant, to offer to become his surety. And, at last, after many disappointments and delays, he gave the signal, and the prison gates were opened. May, 1780. Ætat. 31.

It was impossible to avoid giving the details of this unfortunate portion of Mirabeau's life. Forty-one months spent in a dungeon forms too important an epoch in a man's existence for a biographer to pass it over; or to shun the detail of the causes and effects. Forty-one Dec. 13. 1780. Ætat. 31.

months of solitude and privation — of alternate hopes and fears wound to their highest pitch — of arduous study — of excessive physical suffering — must colour a human being's whole after-existence. The devoted love of Sophie ennobled his sufferings. She erred — but her error was redeemed by her heroism and self-abnegation. Resolved in her own thoughts that she was not the wife of the poor old man to whom her parents had forced her to give her hand, but of him who possessed her heart, she believed it to be her duty to bear all rather than concede. That her too ardent nature required the stay of religion cannot be denied, but her generosity and heroism are undoubted, and shed a grace over details which would otherwise be revolting.*

Mirabeau quitted his prison, eager to gain his father's good will, and redeem himself in the eyes of the world. He stept out, from so long a series of suffering and imprisonment, with a spirit as vigorous and free as in boyhood. All were astonished by his mingled gentleness and vivacity; his submission to his father, joined to reliance in his own powers. Some months

* The subsequent history of this hapless victim of a depraved state of society which set the seal of guilt on her attachment, may be briefly stated. After the birth of her child, Sophie was taken from the asylum in which she was first placed, and confined in the convent of Saintes-Claires, at Gien. By degrees many indulgences were allowed her, and she received visits. Mirabeau became jealous, and angrily expressed his jealousy, both in letters, and in a single interview which they had after his liberatinn from Vincennes. Had Mirabeau come to this interview with a candid mind and a constant heart, he had at once have acknowledged Sophie's innocence. But his attachment had waned, and he was intent on completing his reconciliation with his father, and contriving one with his wife. He played the part of the wolf with the lamb in the fable; and, to the utter destruction of the nobler portion of his nature, the ties of love and affection, the knitting of which had occasioned misery and ruin to both, were broken for ever. Soon after, the death of her husband restored Sophie to her liberty, but she chose to continue to reside within the precincts of the convent, though she used her liberty to make visits and excursions. She was greatly loved by all who knew her. Her sweetness and gentleness attached many friends: her charity and kind sympathy caused her to be beloved by the poor, by whom her memory was long gratefully preserved. She formed a second attachment for a gentleman to whom she was about to be married, but his death prevented their union. Sophie resolved not to survive him. Immediately on receiving his last sigh, she prepared to die. She shut herself up with two braziers of burning charcoal; and was found on the morrow dead. She died on the 8th September, 1789, in the 37th year of her age.

passed before the marquis would see him, but, when he did, he expressed himself to his brother in more favourable terms than he had ever before done. Occupied in the task of reforming, he even began to praise him. It is to be remarked, that the interloper in the family, madame du Pailly, was absent at this time, and the son was allowed to make his own way with his father.

The end of all the marquis's actions was to reunite his son to his wife. This was a matter of difficulty, and the greater on account of the sentence pronounced against Mirabeau at Pontarlier, on occasion of his flight with madame de Monnier. Many plans were projected to get rid of this sentence; the readiest was, to obtain letters of abolition from the king. But Mirabeau refused a line of conduct which would have saved him only; he was determined that his cause should not be separated from that of Sophie. With a resolution worthy of his impetuous and energetic nature, he surrendered, and constituted himself prisoner at Pontarlier while the cause was again tried. He was counselled to take the line of a timid defence, but he refused. Convinced of the irregularity of his trial, and the want of all judicial proof against him, he met the most imminent danger calmly and resolutely. His father writes:—"His conduct is firm, and his position as advantageous as possible. He is praised for his nobleness and audacity in the singular tone of his appeal against a capital sentence. Now that I see him in saddle, he holds himself well, and has this real advantage with the public, of entirely exculpating his accomplice, on which he is resolved at all events. You have no idea of what your nephew is on great occasions." Nor did the imprisonment of months in an unhealthy and narrow dungeon move him. When his father desired to attempt measures of conciliation with the adversary, he declared that the view of the scaffold under his window would not make him accept any propositions while in prison. "I have said to my father," he wrote to his brother-in-law, M. du Saillant, "and I repeat to you, that, before God and man,

1782. Ætat. 33.

no one has a right to interfere in my affairs against my will, my consent, my opinion; and with this firm conviction I declare, that I will consent to no accommodation until former proceedings are reversed; and I will sign nothing in which my simple and entire acquittal, that of madame de Monnier, the restitution of her dowery, an annuity for her, and the payment of my own expenses, are not comprised." His memoirs and defence are eloquent and resolute, and in them first shone forth that brilliant genius which afterwards ruled France.

At length an accommodation on his own terms, with the exception of the pecuniary condition that regarded himself, was completed. Mirabeau left his prison on the 14th of August, 1782. He left it, indeed, a beggar and in debt; his father denied him every assistance, and refused, in opprobrious terms, to become his surety. His courage sank under these misfortunes; he wrote to his sister, "I am free, but to what use shall I put my liberty? Disowned by my father; forgotten, hated perhaps by my mother, for having desired to serve her; avoided by my uncle; watched for by my creditors, not one of whom has been paid, though I have been deprived of the means of subsistence under the pretence of satisfying them; menaced by my wife, or those who govern her; destitute of every thing — income, career, credit — O! that it pleased God that my enemies were not as cowardly as they are malicious, and a thrust of a sword would end all!"

To please his family and obtain an income, Mirabeau next entered into a law-suit to force his wife to become reconciled with him. This was an unworthy act. In the pleadings, where he stood forth as his own advocate, he exerted an overwhelming eloquence, that silenced his adversaries, and drew an immense audience of gentry belonging to Provence to the hall where the trial was carried on. He however failed, and a decree of separation was passed in the law courts of Provence, and confirmed in Paris.* By this time the marquis

* The subsequent life of Madame de Mirabeau was singular. For some

had become as inveterate as ever against his son: he did not imprison him, but he kept the royal order, permitting him to assign him his place of residence, hanging over his head, so to be able to remove him from his own vicinity if he became troublesome.

Mirabeau felt the necessity of forming a career for himself, and earning a subsistence. He failed in his first attempts in Paris, and, as a last resource, turned his eyes towards England. His visit to London, however, was full of mortification and disappointment. He found no path open by which a French author could maintain himself. His letters are full of bitterness at this period; his father refused him the slightest provision, and, he says, used all his address to cause him to die of hunger, since he could not hope to make him rob on the highway. It is difficult for those who live in the sunshine of life, as well as for those who are brought up to earn their bread in a profession, or by trade, to understand the degree of exasperation engendered in the heart of a rich man's son, reduced to penury by the injustice of his parent. He finds it impossible to make money of his talents, and indignities, unknown to the merest labourer, swarm around him. It is much if he can earn a bare and precarious subsistence, eaten into by previous debts, and dependent on the selfishness and caprice of others. Mirabeau tasted of the dregs of poverty; his natural inaptitude to calculation

1784. Ætat. 35.

years she continued under her father's guidance, and, at his wish, to live a life of pleasure; theatricals and every sort of dissipation being the order of the day. A reconciliation was set on foot, and had nearly been accomplished between her and her husband at the period of his death. She emigrated with her father during the revolution, and suffered a good deal of poverty. She subsequently married a count de Rocca, and visited Paris, to endeavour to recover some portion of her property. Her husband died soon after, and she resumed the name of Mirabeau, of which she became proud, reviving the recollections of past times, surrounding herself with every object that could remind her of the husband of her youth. She lived in intimacy with his sister, madame du Saillant, and extended her kindness to the young man whom Mirabeau had adopted. Though frivolous, she had never been ill conducted, and her faults, being those of timidity, are chiefly to be attributed to her father, who, loving ease and pleasure, and glad to have his daughter with him, prevented her by every means in his power from fulfilling her duties towards her husband. She passed her last years in the hotel de Mirabeau, and died in the year 1800, in the same room where her husband had expired.

increased his difficulties; he was generous and profuse, even when what he gave or spent reduced him to absolute want.

1785. Ætat. 36. On his return to France, he found the public mind engrossed by questions of political finance. Mirabeau entered on the discussion with his accustomed eagerness. He published several pamphlets, which attracted general attention and added to his notoriety. The minister Calonne at first made use of his pen, but they afterwards disagreed. Under his patronage, Mirabeau endeavoured to get diplomatic employment in Germany. He visited Berlin at the period of Frederic the Great's death, and several times subsequently. His correspondence from Berlin is not, however, worthy of his character or genius. It was not published at this time; he kept it back till 1789, when, under the necessity of acquiring money to carry on the expenses of his election in Provence, he had no other resource except bringing out a book, sure to acquire notoriety from the scandalous anecdotes it contained, but not adapted to sustain the credit of the author. His pamphlets on finance, which attacked that system of gambling in the public funds, called, in France, *agiotage*, which, while it enriches individuals, is ruinous to the country, deserve the highest praise for their utility. They, however, attacked powerful interests; and one of them was suppressed by a decree of government, and even his personal liberty was menaced. He saved himself by a timely retreat to Liege. He here entered into a financial controversy with Necker, which was rendered the more conspicuous by the allusions made by Mirabeau to the necessity of assembling the states-general and establishing a constitution. The convocation of notables, which occurred during this year, was a sort of commentary on his views. He expected to be named secretary to the assembly, but that place was given to Dupont de Nemours; and, when he returned to Paris in September, the notables were already dismissed. Mirabeau, in his letters at this period, displays that deep interest in politics which

1787. Ætat. 38.

afterwards was to engross his life, and led to his success and triumph. "It is impossible," he writes, "to witness the excess of shame and folly which combine to engulf my country without consternation. It is not given to human wisdom to guess where all this will find a term." Meanwhile his pen was never idle; and in the midst of various journeys, and multiplied occupations, he published a variety of political works, which drew public observation on him; though now for the most part they are forgotten, as belonging to a state of things sunk in perpetual oblivion. In these he never ceased to attack the abuses of government; to urge the necessity of framing a constitution for his country; and to announce with enthusiasm his love of political liberty and independence.

In the history of Mirabeau, so far, we find his life divided into two parts. The first, up to the age of two and thirty, was stormy and disastrous; but the accidents that marked it did not take him from private life. Proud of his station and name, and ambitious of distinction, yet the vices of youth wrecked him at the very outset, and the conduct of his father, who acted the part of Cornish wrecker, rather than taking his natural post of pilot, threatened his perpetual submersion. As lord Brougham observes, in his observations on his character, "There is, perhaps, no second instance of an individual whose faults have been committed under such a pressure of ill-treatment, to besiege and force his virtue, rather than of temptation, to seduce and betray it." The extraordinary energy of his character alone saved him; and he merited the praise, not only of delivering himself, through his resolute and unwearied exertions, from the dungeon in which, had he been a weaker man, he had been left to perish, but also of making good use of the leisure which the sad and solitary hours of imprisonment afforded, to store his mind with knowledge.

In the second portion of his life, till the election of deputies for the states-general, he was no longer pursued by private enemies; and his passions, though they were

not sobered, yet, not being violently opposed, no longer afforded a topic for public scandal. At first, he chiefly endeavoured to obtain a maintenance, since his father's parsimony reduced him to indigence. His pride and fortitude continued to support him in so hard a trial. We have no instance of any application of his for help from the rich and powerful — he was extravagant, but never mean; and he could labour industriously without stooping to any dishonourable shifts. By degrees he acquired such name and esteem among men in power as induced them to employ him in public services. Then, as the political atmosphere of France became overcast, and the howlings of the coming tempest audible, Mirabeau felt within himself that the hour was approaching when he should acquire greatness. He had displayed his wonderful power of public speaking, during his law-suit with his wife, some years before: the recollection of the effects produced by his forcible and impetuous eloquence, which almost gained his cause against reason and justice, gave foundation to his hopes of distinction, if he should be allowed to speak for the public cause. These feelings did not make him weakly eager to put himself forward; he was calm in the knowledge of his power. "Leave me, then, in my obscurity," he wrote, in 1787, to the satellite of a minister,—"I say, in my obscurity, for it is really my design to remain unalterably in it, until a regular order of things arises from the present state of tumult, and till some great revolution, either for good or ill, enjoins a good citizen, who is always accountable for his suffrage and even his talents, to raise his voice. This revolution cannot be long delayed. The public vessel is in a strait, equally short and difficult. An able pilot could doubtless guide it into the open sea; but he cannot, without the consent of the crew, and at this moment no one sailor can be despised."

Mirabeau deserves the praise of keeping at this season far above all petty traffic of his influence and pen. He saw the safety and glory of France, and the rise of a national constitution, in the opposition of the parliament to

the court, and in the consequent necessity of assembling the states-general. He represented these convictions to the minister Montmorin, but without avail; on the contrary, Montmorin earnestly requested him to undertake his defence, and to attack the parliament. Mirabeau, in reply, set before the minister the errors of his views, and refused, with dignity, the task offered him. "Do not," he concludes, "compromise a zealous servant, who will despise danger when called upon to devote himself for his country, but who would not, even for the price of all earthly crowns, prostitute himself in an equivocal cause, the aim of which is uncertain, the principle doubtful, and the progress fearful and dark. Should I not lose all the little talent of which you exaggerate the influence, if I renounced that inflexible independence which alone gains me success, and which only can render me useful to my country and my king? When the day arrives, when, animated by my conscience, and strong in my conviction, an honourable citizen, a faithful subject, an honest writer, I cast myself into the *melée*, I shall be able to say, 'Listen to a man who has never varied in his principles, nor deserted the public cause.'"

And it must be remarked, in honour of Mirabeau, when doubts are cast upon his subsequent career, that, at the moment that he refused the aid of his pen to a powerful minister, he was suffering the extreme of penury, aggravated by its being shared by a dear friend. When, therefore, he afterwards accepted the pay of the court, we may believe, unworthy as was the act, that he compromised no principle; but, though a reformer, not being a republican, the support he engaged to give to the king had the suffrage of his conscience.

The reputation of Mirabeau was now at its height; but, though his genius was acknowledged, he was not esteemed a good member of society. It is strange on what reputation depends: it may seem a paradox to say, that it often depends on modesty. Notoriety, and even success, may follow the unblushing man; but the good word of our fellow-creatures clings rather to him 1788. Ætat. 39.

whose worth is crowned by the graceful and conciliating virtue of modesty. Mirabeau had been oppressed — he had suffered much; his ostensible errors were venial, and such as many a man might have committed without entire condemnation; but the publicity that attended them, and the readiness with which he exposed his faults, and his family persecution, to public view, displeased and offended. He was feared as a false friend, as well as a dangerous enemy. Yet, wherever he appeared, he gained the hearts of those whom he addressed. He had the art of rendering himself agreeable and fascinating to all. The truth is that, though in theory and absence, we may approve the unblameable, the torpid, and the coldly good, our nature forces us to prefer what is vivacious, exhilarating, and original. This is the secret of the influence exercised by men, whose biographers labour to excuse and to account for the spontaneous ebullitions of sympathy and affection that follow their steps. Mirabeau was easy, complaisant, gay, and full of animation and variety in his conversation; he had, in a supreme degree, what his father named the dangerous gift of familiarity. It was his delight to cast aside all etiquette, and to reduce his intercourse to the interchange of the real emotions of the heart and expression of ideas, unaccompanied by any disguise or conventional refinements;—for this, he did not scruple to appear at times rude and even vulgar; but also by this he inspired confidence, as being frank and true.

At length, the hour long expected, long desired, came, when the states-general were convoked by a royal decree of the 27th December, 1788. Mirabeau passionately desired to belong to the assembly; and, relying on the popularity which he enjoyed in his native province, departed for Aix early in the following month. The nobles and high clergy of Provence were vehemently opposed to the changes they apprehended in government, and were zealously wedded to the privileges of their order. They entered a protest against

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certain portions of the royal decree which threw power into the hands of the people. When Mirabeau arrived among them as the partisan of the dawning liberty of his country, he was received as an enemy. He raised his voice against the protest, and naturally took his place at the head of the liberal party. The nobles commenced their attack against him by excluding him from among them, on the pretext that he did not (as an elder son merely) possess any fief. Mirabeau protested against this exclusion, as well in his own name as in those of every other in a similar situation with himself; but in vain. On the 8th of the following February, in an assembly of the nobles, on the proposition of the marquis de Fare, his exclusion was pronounced, as not possessing either estate or fief in Provence. Mirabeau spared neither pamphlets nor speeches on the occasion; though, occupied by the calls made on him by his party during the day, he could only give the hours of night to composing and publishing. "I do not write a line," he says, in one of his letters, of the date of the 8th February, "that I am not interrupted thirty times, and to such a degree, that I can only labour at public affairs by night. You know what cardinal de Retz said: — '*The chief hinderance of the head of a party is his party.*' A thousand minor annoyances, a thousand important arrangements, a thousand inevitable interruptions, deprive me, during the day, of all presence of mind to compose, and of all coherence of ideas and style."

Besides these labours, he had the more difficult task of keeping clear of brawls and duels among a class of men whose dearest wish was to provoke him to the committal of an outrage. Proud and arrogant themselves, they hoped to taunt one yet prouder into some deed of violence that would give them the advantage over him. But haughty as Mirabeau was, he was yet wiser; the peculiarity of his genius was a quick perception of the proper line of conduct, and he preserved his dignity, while he showed himself forbearing.

He had to meet yet another difficulty. He published his correspondence from Berlin at this moment, for the purpose of acquiring the funds necessary for his election: this work was condemned to be burnt, by the parliament. It had been published anonymously; but, as the name of the author was well known, Mirabeau saw himself forced to make a journey to Paris, for the purpose of silencing his enemies, and giving courage to his friends, who quailed under the attacks made against him. This journey and short absence served but to raise to enthusiasm the favour with which he was regarded by the population of Provence. Deputations of the *bourgeoisie* of Marseilles and Aix met him on his return, with all the manifestations of affection and joy which the people of the south render so cordial and demonstrative. The road he traversed was strewn with flowers; fireworks were let off; a crowd of 50,000 persons assembled round his carriage, while cries of "Vive Mirabeau!" rent the air. No noble dared show himself in the streets. "If you hate oppression as much as you love your friends," Mirabeau said to the assembled citizens, "you will never be oppressed." He was, within a few days after, received with similar demonstrations at Marseilles: 120,000 inhabitants filled the streets to welcome him; two louis were paid for a window to look on him — his carriage was covered with laurels — the people kissed the wheels — the women brought their children to him. Mirabeau, who saw, in his elevation in the public favour, the stepping stone to success, beheld these demonstrations with proud delight; they were the signals of his triumph over the party who trampled on him — over that series of adversity which, from his cradle to that hour, had never ceased to crush him. The report, carefully spread, that this triumph had been got up by his friends, vanished before the fact that the whole population were his friends, and that the getting up was merely his assent to receive the marks of their enthusiastic favour. That he had done

his best to curry favour with the people is true: that fault abides with him, if it be one.

Among other manœuvres he had, it is said, opened a clothier's shop at Marseilles. There is no foundation for this story, although Marat, and other partisans of equality of his own day, asserted it. He had been obliged, indeed, to make himself free of the town, when candidate for the deputyship. His only chance was to make friends with the people. He was treated with contumely by the nobles; and even now his triumph was not devoid of drawback, occasioned by the indignities cast on him by the class to which he properly belonged: their insults did not fail to sting his pride, and rouse him to revenge, even while he successfully preserved himself from open quarrelling.

The popularity he acquired he was soon called upon to exert. M. Caraman, military commander in Provence, applied to him to allay the disturbances occasioned by a scarcity. The nobles regarded the pending famine as a means of taming the people; and the same marquis de Fare, who had originated the exclusion of Mirabeau from the assembly, insolently exclaimed, —"Do the people hunger? — let them eat the dung of my horses." Such a speech, and such a spirit, manifested by the wealthy, naturally exasperated the poor. The weakness of the magistrates, who decreed so great a reduction in the price of food that the traders could no longer afford to sell it, only augmented the public peril: the granaries were pillaged, — blood was spilt in the streets. At the request of M. de Caraman, Mirabeau stept forward,—he persuaded the governor to withdraw the soldiery,—he induced the bourgeois youth to take arms to keep the peace. His eloquence, the credit given to his sincerity and good intentions, pacified the people, and first at Marseilles, and afterwards at Aix, he restored peace and security. At this period, while he fulfilled the noble part of pacificator and of a citizen, powerful only through the influence of his genius and patriotism, he was elected, both by

Marseilles and Aix, deputy of the *tiers état* in the approaching assembly of the states-general. He gave the preference to the latter, as circumstances rendered it doubtful whether his election for Marseilles would be admitted by his colleagues.

We now arrive at the epoch when he developed the whole force of his genius, and acquired immortality, as the great leader of a revolution which, at its first outbreak, commanded the sympathy and respect of the world which looked on; beholding with gladness and hope the overthrow of feudal abuses, and the restoration of the oppressed majority of the French nation to the rights of men and citizens.

The first steps that Mirabeau trod towards greatness were taken on slippery ground. The eyes of the crowd sought for him with avidity, during the procession of the king and states-general to the church of St. Louis, on the 4th May. He appeared, with his dark shaggy hair, his beetling brows, and luminous eyes, stepping proudly on. A murmur of disapprobation was raised; — he looked round, and all was silent; yet in that moment he felt the struggle, the combat that would ensue: his fiery nature made him also, perhaps, rely on victory. When the names of the deputies were called over, and those of other popular men were applauded, hisses of disapprobation followed his. They did not daunt him: he walked across the chamber to his place with an air of resolution and haughtiness that spoke of perseverance and vigour in the coming struggle.

To give himself notoriety and weight, he commenced by publishing a journal of the proceedings of the chambers. This publication was seized by government, and he then changed its title to that of letters to his constituents. He excited animosity by this publication in the chamber itself, but it added to his weight and influence.

The first combat of the *tiers état* with the two other chambers is well known. They demanded that their consultations should be held in common, while the

noblesse and clergy desired each their chamber, secure that the lower one would be crushed by the union of the two higher with the king. Mirabeau, at first, recommended that system of passive resistance which is all powerful when resorted to resolutely by numbers. During the interval that succeeded, Mirabeau had an interview with Necker, by the desire of his friend Duroverai; but it availed nothing. Mirabeau regarded Necker as a weak man, though he acknowledged his unimpeachable honesty; and he was soon after carried far beyond any necessity of recurring to his patronage for advancement, when, by echoing the voices of many men, and giving expression and direction to their passions, his eloquence filled France with the cry of liberty, and gave power and authority to the hesitating deputies.

He met with a check, when the name he wished the assembly of *tiers état* to assume (deputies of the people) was rejected, with ill-founded indignation. The term people was regarded as disgraceful and humiliating. "The nation," he wrote on this occasion, "is not ripe; the folly and frightful disorder of the government have forced the revolution as in a hotbed; it has outgrown our aptitude and knowledge. When I defended the word *people*, I had nearly been torn to pieces. It was circulated that I had gone over to the government: — truly I am said to have sold myself to so many, that I wonder I have not acquired a universal monarchy with the money paid for me."

The resolution of the *tiers état*, now naming themselves the national assembly, excited mingled contempt and alarm. The nobility protested against their assumption, and the king was counselled to oppose their resolves by a royal decree; the hall of the deputies was closed, under pretence of preparing for the royal visit; the deputies adjourned to a neighbouring tennis court, and took a solemn oath to stand by each other to the last. On the following day, the 23d of June, the *seance royale* had place, and the decree promulgated that the three orders should vote separately. Satisfied

that this exertion of royal power would tame at once the rebellious deputies, the royal cortege — the ministers, the nobles, and the clergy — left the chamber; the *tiers état*, the self-constituted national assembly, remained. A gloomy silence ensued, broken by Mirabeau, who rose, and, warning them of the danger to be apprehended, added, "I demand of you to seek shelter in your dignity and legislative powers, and that you take refuge in the faith of your oath, which does not allow you to separate till you have formed a constitution." The grand master of ceremonies, de Bréze, now entered, for the purpose of dispersing the deputies, saying, that they had heard the orders of the king. The president, Bailly, replied that he would take those of the assembly. At that moment, on which the public cause hung, — for on the boldness and perseverance of the deputies depended their success, — at that moment of hesitation, Mirabeau rose, and with a manner full of majesty, and a calm voice, he replied, "The commons of France intend to deliberate. We have heard what your king has been advised to say, but you, sir, cannot be his interpreter to the national assembly; you have neither place, nor voice, nor right to speak here. But, to prevent delay, go tell your master, that we are here by the power of the people; and that the power of the bayonet alone shall drive us out."

Victor Hugo, in his essay on the character of Mirabeau, remarks, that these words sealed the fate of the monarchy of France. "They drew a line between the throne and the people; it was the cry of the revolution. No one before Mirabeau dared give it voice. Great men only pronounce the words that decide an epoch. Louis XVI. was afterwards more cruelly insulted, but no expression was used so fatal and so fearful as that of Mirabeau. When he was called Louis Capet, royalty received a disgraceful blow; but, when Mirabeau spoke, it was struck to the heart."*

* There is a fragment preserved of Mirabeau, remarkable for its knowledge of human motives, which shows the stress he laid on a resolute line of conduct. It deserves to be quoted: —

The immediate effect of this outburst was, first, that de Brézé, losing all presence of mind, backed out of the chamber, and the deputies, electrified by the audacity of their self-constituted leader, arose with acclamations, and passed a decree to confirm his words.

The national assembly, which by law was attached to the person of the king, sat at Versailles; the distance from Paris was short, and the capital regarded with growing interest the actions of the deputies. Crowds assembled in the streets, and various tumults ensued: these have been variously attributed to different factions, which excited the people for the purpose of carrying on their own designs. There does not seem much foundation for that opinion; the public cause, the natural turbulence of the Parisians, which had been manifested during every reign of past times; the heat and agitation of the crisis, easily account for the alarming tumults in the metropolis. The chief suspicion at the time rested on the party of the duke of Orleans. Mirabeau did not belong to this; he had no connection with the leaders of the mob; his impracticable and vehement character kept him aloof from coalition with others. He was not sufficiently trusted to be selected as chief, he disdained any other post;

"If I wrote a book on the military art, the chapter on enthusiasm should not be the shortest. If I wrote a treatise on politics, I would treat largely of the *art of daring*, which is not less necessary for the success of civil enterprises than of military operations; and also to try the strength of the man who leads; for it is the further or nearer boundary-line of the possible that marks the difference of men.

"In reading history, I find that almost all the faults committed by the chiefs, of whatever party, arise from indecision in their principles, and obliquity of conduct. They revolt by halves; they are faithful by halves: they dare not entirely cast aside duty, nor entirely sacrifice their passions. The first steps, which ought to be full of confidence, are vacillating and ill-assumed: they arrange a retreat, and take several roads to reach the goal. Artifices, that favourite resource of ordinary politicians, are the effect of this timidity of the understanding or the heart. They negotiate to disguise themselves, to attract partisans, while they ought to walk straight to the object in view by the shortest line. What is the invariable result? He who wishes to deceive is deceived; they have failed in seizing the decisive moment, and have persuaded no one. As much as extremes are unwise in the course of daily life, so much are half measures insufficient in critical events; and the most dangerous, as well as the most inconsistent conduct, is to get half rid of prejudices. But there are nearly as few resolute bad men as decided honest ones; and most men want character."

feeling that, without descending to manœuvre and consultations, his energy, eloquence, and presence of mind, would place him in the van of war. He remained, therefore, independent; uneasy when others obtained influence in the assembly, visiting Paris as a looker on, and waiting his time, which soon came. For it must be remembered, that, at this period, notwithstanding the distinguished part he had acted, Mirabeau's supremacy was by no means acknowledged. There was a large party against him, and Barnave was held up by it as the more eloquent and greater man. The errors of his youth were remembered, and a thousand calumnies spread abroad against him; the people were even influenced by them, and though, at one time they were ready to carry him in triumph, a moment after the hawkers cried about *the great treason of count de Mirabeau.* When his private conduct was attacked, Mirabeau was silent; "Because," he says, with graceful dignity, "a strict silence is the expiation of faults purely personal, however excusable they may be; and because I waited till time, and my services, should win for me the esteem of the worthy; because, also, the rod of censure has always seemed respectable to me, even in the hands of my enemies; and, above all, because I have never seen any thing but narrow egotism and ridiculous impropriety in occupying one's fellow citizens in affairs not belonging to them." But when his public conduct was attacked, he defended it with an energy and truth that bore down all attack, and raised him higher than ever in the general esteem.

To return to the epoch at which we are arrived. To quell the capital and subdue the deputies, the king and his counsellors summoned troops to surround Paris. Fifteen regiments, composed chiefly of foreigners, advanced. It became evident that the design was formed of using the bayonet, to which Mirabeau had referred, as the only power to which they would submit. He now again came forward to stop the progress of the evil. He proposed an address to the king, demanding that the

march of the troops should be countermanded. He still preserved a respectful style towards the monarch, but he did not spare the measures of government, and exposed in open day the direct approach of war and massacre. His speech was covered with applause, and he was commissioned to draw up an address to the king. It was short and forcible: it prophesied, with sagacity, the dangers that must ensue from the presence of the military; it protested with dignity against the force about to be exercised against the assembly, and declared the resolution of the deputies, in spite of snares, difficulties, and terror, to prosecute their task and regenerate the kingdom. "For the first time," says madame de Stael, "France heard that popular eloquence whose natural power is augmented by the importance of events." "It was by Mirabeau," Brougham observes, "that the people were first made to feel the force of the orator, first taught what it was to hear spoken reason and spoken passion; and the silence of ages in those halls was first broken by the thunder of his voice, echoing through the lofty vaults now covering multitudes of excited men."

Dumont, in his "Souvenirs de Mirabeau," asserts that he drew up this address. On several other occasions, he assumes the merit either of writing for Mirabeau or suggesting his speeches. He speaks of him as a great plagiarist, putting all his associates to use in collecting materials for him, and contenting himself with giving them form, or sometimes only voice. This sort of accusation is exceedingly futile. The capacity of gathering materials, lying barren but for the life he puts into them, is the great attribute of genius: it hews an Apollo out of the marble block; places the colours of Raphael on the bare canvass; collects, in one focus, the thoughts of many men inspired by passion and nature: it, as with Mirabeau, takes the spirit of the times, the thoughts and words excited during a crisis; and, by giving to them a voice of command or persuasion, rules the minds of all. In this manner, Mirabeau was a plagiarist, but

none but he could use, to govern and subdue, the weapons fabricated, it might be, by other hands. To quote the apt metaphor of Carlisle, he might gather the fuel from others, but the fire was his own. He was not a man formed of shreds and patches taken from other men, nor was Dumont endowed with creative powers to call such a being into life. Mirabeau was a man of God's own making, full of wild passion and remorseful error, but true to the touch of nature; fraught with genius and power; a natural king among those whom he used as his subjects to pay tribute to, and extend the sphere of, his greatness.

1789. July 11. The death of the marquis de Mirabeau, at the age of seventy-three, took place at this period. From the time that his son figured in the assembly, he became deeply interested in his career; declaring that his success was "glory, true glory." He was suffering by a chronic pulmonary catarrh, and evidently declining. Mirabeau frequently visited him, and was well received, though they never discussed politics during these short visits. But the marquis caused the speeches of his son to be read to him, as well as the papers that recounted the sittings of the assembly in which he figured. On the 11th of July, while he was listening to his granddaughter reading, he closed his eyes — his breathing failed — and when she looked up he was dead, with a smile on his face.

Mirabeau, who venerated his father, in spite of the injuries he had sustained from him, was deeply affected by this loss: perhaps pride added to his demonstrations of affliction. He wrote to his constituents, that all the citizens in the world ought to mourn; he scarcely appeared in the assembly, and for a few days gave himself up to sorrow.

It was not a period when a great political character could withdraw himself for more than a few days. The crisis was at hand. The king had returned a cold answer to the address drawn up by Mirabeau, and presented by the most distinguished deputies; the court still pursued the plan of assembling troops; Necker

was dismissed from the ministry ; the investment of the capital by the military became imminent, — when the people, animated by mixed fear and indignation, rose : they seized on all the arms they could obtain; the bastille was demolished; for the first time the Parisians felt their power, and tasted of the triumph of shedding the blood of those who resisted them. July 14.

The terror of these acts spread to Versailles. The assembly sent deputation after deputation to the king, imploring him to pacify Paris by countermanding the troops. When the destruction of the bastille was known, a fifth deputation was prepared to be presented to the monarch. It was composed of twenty-four members : they were about to leave the chamber on this errand, when Mirabeau stopped them, and with increased vehemence exclaimed, — " Tell the king, that the hordes of foreigners that surround us were yesterday visited by the princes, the princesses, and their favourites, who caressed and exhorted them, and covered them with presents. Tell him that, during the night, these foreign satellites, gorged with gold and wine, predicted, in their impious songs, the servitude of France, and brutally invoked the destruction of the national assembly. Tell him that, in his own palace, his courtiers mingled in the dance to the sound of such music, and that similar to these were the preparations of Saint Bartholomew. Tell him, that that Henry IV., whose memory the whole world blesses, he, who ought to be his model among his ancestors, sent provisions to Paris when it revolted, and he was besieging it in person ; while, on the contrary, his ferocious advisers keep the corn, brought by trade, from his starving and faithful capital." The deputation was about to carry his words to the king, when the arrival of Louis, without guards or escort, was announced. A murmur of glad welcome ran through the assembly. " Wait," said Mirabeau gravely, " till the king has announced his good intentions. Let a serious respect receive the monarch in this moment of sorrow. The silence of the people is the lesson of kings."

Thus did this wonderful man, by means of the fire and impetuosity of his character, enter at once into the spirit of the hour, while his genius suggested the expressions and the tone that gave it direction and voice.

It is impossible to enter into the detail of all Mirabeau's speeches and acts. A rapid glance at his votes and declarations during this period must suffice. Mirabeau detested despotism, whose iron hand had fallen so heavily on himself. The aid given by the government of his country to his father's tyranny, — the ban placed on him by the nobility who were his equals, — the burning desire for distinction that consumed him, — his contempt for his inferiors in talent, — his faith in the revolution, — such were the passions that gave force to his genius. But his genius showed itself omnipotent nowhere except in the tribune. When he wrote, he but half expressed his thoughts; his passions were but half excited; and Mirabeau's power lay in the union of his passions and his genius. Apart, the former degenerated into vice, and the latter showed itself either exaggerated, sophistical, or inert. In the tribune, their union was complete. When he began to speak he was at first confused, — his breast heaved, — his words were broken, — but the sight of his opponents, — the knowledge of the sympathy he should find in the galleries, — the inspiration of the moment, — suddenly dispersed all mistiness; his eloquence became clear, fervid, sublime, — the truth conjured up images at once striking and appalling. When he was farther excited by the difficulties of a crisis, his courage rose to meet it, — he stept forward with grandeur; a word or a look, which his talent and ugliness at once combined to render imposing, shone out on the assembly, — electrified and commanded it.

This power of seizing on the spirit of the question, clearing the view of the assembly, and leading it onward in the right road, he exerted memorably on the 24th September, when Necker, to remedy the disastrous state of the finances, proposed a patriotic contri-

bution of a fourth of the incomes. A committee, after three days spent in examination, approved the plan. Mirabeau, the known enemy of Necker, spoke, to engage the assembly to adopt it at once, on the recommendation of the minister, without taking any responsibility on itself. The friends of Necker saw the snare, and accused him of injuring the plan of the minister, while he pretended to support it. Mirabeau replied, that he was not the partisan, but, were he the dearest friend of the minister, he should not hesitate to compromise him rather than the assembly. Necker might deceive himself, and the kingdom receive no detriment; but that the public weal were compromised, if the assembly lost its credit. These words had some effect, but still the discussion went on, and still the deputies hesitated to adopt Necker's proposition, till Mirabeau, again ascending the tribune, burst forth with a torrent of overwhelming eloquence in its favour: he painted the horrors of a national bankruptcy, and the consequent guilt of incurring it; he expatiated on the wide-spread misery that must ensue. He continued,—"Two centuries of robbery and depredation have opened a gulf in which the kingdom is nearly swallowed; this gulf must be filled up. Here is a list of French proprietors; select among the richest, so to lessen the number of victims; but still select — for must not a few perish to save the many? Two thousand notables possess enough to fill up the deficit, to bring back order into your finances, and peace and prosperity to the kingdom. Strike! immolate without pity these hapless victims — precipitate them into the abyss; — it will close! Ha! you draw back with horror. Inconsistent pusillanimous men! Do you not see that when you decree bankruptcy, or, what is still more odious, when you render it inevitable without decreeing it, you stain yourselves with a still greater and yet a gratuitous crime? for this sacrifice will at least fill up the deficit. But do you think, because you do not pay, you will no longer be in debt? Do you believe that the thousands, the millions of men,

who in one moment will lose by the explosion, or by its reaction, all that made the comfort of their lives, and, perhaps, their only means of support, will allow you to reap the fruits of your crime in peace? Stoical contemplators of the incalculable ills which this catastrophe will bring on France! Insensible egotists! who think that the convulsions of despair and misery will pass away like every other, and the more quickly as they are more violent;— are you sure that so many men, without bread, will tranquilly permit you to taste the viands whose quantity and delicacy you will not suffer to be diminished? No!— you will perish in the universal conflagration that you do not tremble to set a-light, and the loss of your honour will not preserve one of your detestable enjoyments.

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Vote, then, for this extraordinary subsidy;— may it suffice! Vote it; because, if you have any doubts with regard to the means (vague and uncertain doubts), you have none on its necessity, and our want of power to replace this proposition by any other — at least for the present. Vote it; for public affairs will not endure procrastination, and we are accountable for all delay. Beware of asking for time. Ruin never gives that. Some days ago, gentlemen, in reference to a ridiculous tumult in the Palais Royal—a laughable insurrection which had no importance except in feeble minds — you heard the violent cry uttered, 'Cataline is at the gates of Rome, and you deliberate!' and then certainly we had near us neither Cataline, nor danger, nor faction, nor Rome. But now bankruptcy, hideous bankruptcy is before us; she menaces to consume you,— your possessions and your honour,—and you deliberate!"

These words raised a tumult of enthusiasm in the assembly. A deputy rose to reply, but the cries overbore him; and, frightened by his task, he remained motionless and mute. "I was near Mirabeau," writes

madame de Stäel, "when he thus delivered himself. Nothing could be more impressive than his voice; his gestures and words were pregnant with an animation, the power of which was prodigious. The assembly at once received the report of the committee, and adopted the plan of the minister." "This," remarks Thiers, "is the triumph of eloquence; but he alone could obtain it who was animated by the passions and just views of Mirabeau."

Mirabeau hated the assumptions of the aristocracy, but he looked upon royalty as a necessary defence between the lower and the higher orders; at the same time he believed that the welfare of his country demanded that the people should have a voice in the state. He expressed his opinion on this subject in a letter to his uncle the bailli. He says,— "I have always thought, and now more than ever think, that royalty is the only anchor of safety which can preserve us from shipwreck. And how many efforts I have made, and make each day, to support the executive power, and combat the distrust which induces the national assembly to go beyond the mark! For the rest, we must judge of the revolution by the good and evil of its result, not by the license which prevails at present, which forms a state too violent to be durable. I am reassured with regard to the future, by the consideration, that the revolution, be it injurious or beneficial, is, in fact, consummated. The most enlightened men feel that they must assist the change, to lessen its violence; that resistance is as useless as it must be disastrous; and that every citizen, whether zealous or indifferent, must tend to the same end, — facilitate the consolidation of the empire, and give the machine that movement which will allow us to judge of its excellence or its defects. You recommend me to support the executive power; but you will easily discern that the obstinate resistance of one order of the state, by exciting fresh causes of revenge, and producing new

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commotions, would destroy that power round which the supreme law of the state commands us now to rally."

It was in this spirit that he spoke for the veto, though fear, perhaps, of compromising his popularity made him abstain from voting. The veto had become a sort of bugbear. When Mirabeau visited Paris, the mob thronged round his carriage, imploring him to prevent the king from having the veto. They were slaves, they said, if the king had the veto; — the national assembly was useless. "Mirabeau," says Dumont, "carried it off very well: he appeased the people; and, using only vague expressions, dismissed the mob with patrician affability."

At the period of the revolution, when the passions of men were excited to bandy calumny with eager voices and pens dipt in gall, Mirabeau was accused of being an Orleanist. It is difficult to say what an Orleanist was. The duke himself, weak but ambitious, never made one step forward but he made two back; so that it became a saying that the duke of Orleans did not belong to the Orleanists. His name, meanwhile, and money were employed to form a party rather inimical to Louis XIV. than favourable to himself. It added to the tumult and tempest of the times, but was of no real influence in the direction of events. Dumont declares that, living intimately with Mirabeau, the most indiscreet and confiding of men, he saw no trace of his complicity in any plot against the court: but that, familiar with the duke as with every one, his manner gave colour to a report which had no other foundation. That he was at this time the enemy of the court is, however, undoubted. When the fatal feast of the *gardes du corps*, at Versailles, was denounced in the assembly, and the cry of calumny was raised by the royalists, Mirabeau burst out with impetuosity, and declared that he was ready to accuse by name the principal actors in this sacrilegious orgie, on condition that it were first decreed that the person of the king only was inviolable. This expression, pointing at and criminating the queen, silenced the discussion.

During the days of the 5th and 6th October, Mirabeau sought to tranquillise, without any attempt at leading, the multitude. When he first heard of the approach of the rabble rout of *poissardes* and their followers from the capital, for the purpose of forcing the acceptance of the constitution on the king, Mirabeau addressed the president Mounier, saying, "Paris is marching on us: make an excuse; and go to the castle and tell the king to accept the constitution purely and simply." "Paris marches," replied Mounier; "so much the better: let them kill us all — all, without exception — the nation will be the gainer." When the crowd had invaded Versailles, Mirabeau was not seen. Dumont found him in bed before eleven o'clock in the evening. He rose, and they went together to the national assembly, where he displayed his accustomed dignity by calling on the president to cause the assembly to be respected, and to order the chamber to be cleared of the strangers who filled it. It required all his popularity to succeed. The *poissardes* in the gallery, with their usual familiarity, cried out, "Mother Mirabeau must speak — we must hear mother Mirabeau!" but he was not a man to make a show on these occasions.

The king humiliated — the court, driven to extremities, yet still struggling, looked round for agents and supporters. The talents and influence of Mirabeau would render his accession to their party invaluable; Necker had named him "Tribun par calcul, et aristocrate par goût;" and this character, joined to his debts, his bad reputation, his known vices, and the very report that he acted for the duke of Orleans, inspired the notion that he was venal. There can be no doubt Nov.
that, at this period, a thousand different schemes and hopes agitated this strange and powerful man. He detested the aristocracy and despotism; but he was attached to royalty and the image of the English constitution; and various advances made him by the court led him to believe that a conscientious support of royalty might be combined with his personal interests. Du-

mont mentions a conversation he had with him, in which he showed him a plan for the retreat of the king to Metz — the necessity the assembly would find itself under of following him there, and the consequent quelling of the anarchical power in France. Dumont, foreseeing that civil war and massacre would follow such attempts, argued strongly against it. Mirabeau replied that the court was resolved, and that he thought it right to combine to ensure its success, and cause them to act so as to preserve the liberty of the country. His purpose was, however, shaken by the arguments of Dumont, and the whole plan was subsequently given up. Thiers gives a somewhat different account. He narrates that in an interview with a friend, in the park of Versailles, that lasted the whole night, Mirabeau declared that he was resolved for the sake of his glory, for the good of his country, and the advancement of his own fortune, to remain immovable between the throne and the disorganisers, and to consolidate the monarchy while he participated in its power. His pride, however, stood in the way of any debasing steps. When the court made him offers, it was informed that he would make no sacrifice of principles; but that, if the king would be faithful to the constitution, he was ready to become his staunch supporter. His conditions were, that his debts should be paid, and that he should have a place in the ministry. According to law, the ministers could neither speak nor vote in the assembly — before accepting place, Mirabeau endeavoured to get this law repealed. He failed; and during the discussion Lanjuinais proposed that the actual deputies should be forbidden to accept place. Mirabeau angrily replied, that so baneful a decree ought not to be passed for the sake of one man; but that he would vote for it with the amendment, that a place in the ministry should not be forbidden all the deputies, but only to M. de Mirabeau, deputy for Aix. This outburst of frank audacity had no effect; Lanjuinais' motion passed; and Mirabeau felt exceedingly indignant towards the assembly, and often spoke of the members with bitter contempt;

yet his letters bear the impress of generous forbearance, inspired by enlarged views of the duties of a citizen. "I do not say," he writes, "that the assembly is not somewhat severe towards me; with all that, nothing can prevent, when the occasion presents, this struggling, tumultuous, and, above all, ostracising assembly, from returning under my influence: that results from the firmness of my principles, and the support given by my talent. It was from the bottom of my heart that I once wrote, 'Malheur aux peuples reconnaissans!' One is never quit towards one's country. One gains glory, at least, by serving it in whatever state. No element of public servitude ought to exist — and gratitude is a very active one."

There is generosity, but not absolute wisdom in this dictum. In republics, more evil arises from want of accord and stability of purpose than from leaning on one man, especially among the French, who, vain by nature, are more apt each to believe in his own capacity than rely on that of another. Unfortunately, this distrust of public servants took firm root during the revolution. First, no deputy was allowed to be minister, so that no man of business could be deputy. Afterwards, the members of one assembly were not allowed to be elected in the succeeding one, so that inexperience, crude views, and want of mutual reliance, became the characteristic of the French legislators.

Mirabeau's negotiations with the court meanwhile went on; he even received for a short time a pension from Monsieur, the king's eldest brother; the queen treated him with winning condescension — and she was won also by the charm of his superiority and frankness. Thus he did not sell his principles, which remained unchanged, yet he made a mart of them; and, in the eye of history, falls from the high position of a man above the reach of gold. His want of docility, meanwhile, often displeased the court — he refused to compromise his popularity at its beck, and despised the men who wished at once to make use of him and yet to render him useless. 1790 Ætat. 41.

His position, though it seem dubious, was plain enough. He wished to lead a moderately royal party, and give stability to the monarchy. He desired to oppose the jacobins and disorganisers; but his views did not meet the sanguine and senseless hopes and wishes of the court — which aimed at nothing less than a return to the *ancien régime*. He stood therefore companionless — seizing at times on and thundering from the tribune — making his power felt whenever he was roused, but walking in darkness, uncertain of the means which yet he grappled at, whereby to confirm his greatness.

In the assembly he continued to extend his influence by means of his enthusiasm, and his power of expressing it. Various methods had been made use of to get rid of the constituent assembly, and elect another — under the pretence that, the work of forming a constitution being accomplished, their task was at an end, and that the continuation of their power was illegal and a usurpation over the throne. In the midst of the cries which these words called forth, Mirabeau rose. "We are asked," he said "when the deputies of the people, became a national convention? I reply, on that day when, finding the entrance to their chamber surrounded by soldiers, they hastened to assemble in the first place they could find, and swore to perish rather than to betray or abandon the rights of the nation. Our powers on that day changed their nature. Whatever these powers may be which we have exerted, our efforts and our labours have legitimated them, and the adhesion of the whole nation has sanctified them. Do you remember the heroic words of the great man of antiquity, who had neglected the legal forms in saving his country? Summoned by a factious tribune to swear whether he had observed the laws, he replied, 'I swear that I have saved my country!' Gentlemen, I swear that you have saved France!" At this grand oath, the whole assembly, carried away by a sudden impulse, closed the discussion and dismissed the question.

The same power gave him the victory, when he was

accused of conspiring with the duke of Orleans to produce the commotions of the 5th and 6th of October, and caused the accusation to be cast aside as devoid of credit.*

We have an interesting picture of his position at the commencement of the year 1791 from Dumont—who though his friend, and at times his secretary, or rather, as he affirms, the composer of some of his most successful speeches, gives no signs of partiality. "I dined several times at the house of Mirabeau, who told me that he was on terms with the court, and directed its counsels; and that his hopes were well founded—as the royal personages had begun to see the necessity of attaching him to their cause, and of no longer listening to the advice of the emigrants and princes. He now lived in good style, and his house was handsomely fitted up: he was better off than he had ever been, and showed no discretion in the use of his money. I was surprised to see him show off, after dinner, a case in which were several jewels. This was proclaiming his being on the civil list, and I wondered that his popularity did not suffer by it. His table was splendid, and his company numerous. His house was filled early in the morning, and it was a perpetual *levée* from seven o'clock till the hour of his repairing to the assembly; and a great crowd frequently assembled at that time to enjoy the felicity of seeing him pass. Although titles were abolished, he was still the comte de Mirabeau, not only with his servants and visiters, but also the people, who love to decorate their idols. I could have learnt from him the secret of his intercourse with the court, his views, means, and intrigues, for he was well disposed to open himself to me; but I neither wished to be censor nor flatterer. He insinuated twenty times that his only object was to save the monarchy, if it were

1791. Ætat. 42.

* The compiler of the memoirs and correspondence of La Fayette makes no doubt that Mirabeau belonged to the Orleanist faction till after the 6th of October, when he began to treat with the court. This was evidently La Fayette's own conviction, apparently founded on the evidence laid before the assembly, August 7th, 1790, which Mirabeau refuted, as mentioned in the text.

possible. That means were necessary to accomplish this end; that trivial morality was hostile to that on a large scale; that disinterested services were rare; and that hitherto the court had wasted its money on traitors.*

"During, the last week of my stay in Paris, I saw him in a new situation, which he had often pretended to despise, but more from mortification than indifference. He was president of the assembly, — never was the place so well filled. He displayed new talents. He put an order and clearness into the work, of which no idea had hitherto been formed. By a word, he threw light on a question; by a word, he appeased a tumult. His deference to all parties, the respect he always testified for the assembly, the conciseness of his speeches, his answers to the various deputations that came to the bar, — which, whether spontaneous or prepared, were always delivered with dignity and grace, and gave satisfaction even in refusals, — in a word, his activity, impartiality, and presence of mind

* Copy of a treaty with M. de Mirabeau. — "First, The king gives M. de Mirabeau the promise of an embassy: this promise shall be announced by *Monsieur* himself to M. de Mirabeau. Second, The king will immediately, until that promise be fulfilled, grant a private appointment to M. de Mirabeau of 50,000 livres a month, which appointment will continue at least for the space of four months. M. de Mirabeau pledges himself to aid the king with his knowledge, influence, and eloquence, in all that he may judge useful to the welfare of the state and the interest of the king — two things that all good citizens undoubtedly look upon as inseparable; and, in case M. de Mirabeau should not be convinced of the solidity of the reasons that may be given him, he will abstain from speaking on the subject.

(*Approved*) LOUIS.
(*Signed*) LE COMTE DE MIRABEAU."

"*Note.*—The original of this article is in the handwriting of Monsieur, at present Louis XVIII."

This paper is published in vol. ii. appendix, no. v. of the memoirs of Lafayette. It was found in the iron closet, discovered in the Tuileries on the 10th of August, 1792, containing secret papers. In the same receptacle is an autograph letter from Louis XVI. to La Fayette, begging him to concert with Mirabeau respecting the subjects most important to the welfare of the state and the king's service and person. This letter La Fayette suspects to have been dictated by Mirabeau himself, and was never received by him. It is dated June 29th, 1790. The treaty first quoted is printed without a date. This alliance of the court with Mirabeau was first brought about by *Monsieur*, the king's eldest brother. Afterwards, it would seem that some other was entered into, negotiated by the count de la Mark, afterwards prince d'Aremberg, which was mentioned to Bouille, Feb. 6th, 1791. The prince d'Aremberg lived in Brussels till 1833, and said to La Fayette, that Mirabeau only made himself be paid to be of his own opinion; yet the stipulation of silence, when not convinced by the court, in the above treaty, looks like a still more entire sale of his influence.

added to his reputation and success in a place which had been a stumbling block to his predecessors. He had the art of putting himself foremost, and drawing the general attention on himself, even when, not being allowed to speak from the tribune, he appeared to have fallen from his best prerogative. Several of his enemies and rivals, who had chosen him for the sake of putting him in eclipse, had the chagrin of finding that they had added to his glory.

" He was far from being in good health, and told me that he felt himself perishing away. I observed that his style of life would long ago have killed a man less robust than himself. He had no repose from seven in the morning till ten or eleven at night. He was in continual conversation and agitation both of thought and feeling. When we parted, he embraced me with an emotion he had never before displayed. — ' I shall die at the oar,' he said, ' and we probably shall never meet again. When I am gone my worth will be acknowledged. The evils that I have arrested will burst over France, and the criminal faction that trembles before me will no longer be bridled. I have only prophecies of evil before my eyes. Ah ! my friend, how right we were when we desired at the beginning to prevent the commons from declaring themselves a national assembly, — that was the origin of our evils. Since they were victorious, they have not ceased to show themselves unworthy ; they have desired to govern the king, instead of governing through him. Now neither they nor he will have authority ; a vile faction will domineer over them, and fill France with terror."

He lived for three months after saying these words, and lived still to triumph, and to add to his glory. The last scene of moment in which he displayed his mighty influence was during the discussion of the law against emigration. Mirabeau opposed it as tyrannical and unjust: the popular voice went the other way, and cries were uttered against him. His thunder silenced their more feeble demonstrations. " The popularity,"

he exclaimed, "which I desired is but a feeble reed; but I will force it into the earth, and it shall take root in the soil of reason and justice!" Applause followed this burst. "I swear," he continued, "if a law of emigration passes, I swear to disobey you." He descended from the tribune, having silenced his enemies, and astonished the assembly. The discussion went on, and the adjournment was moved, to give time to prepare a law different from the one under discussion, and so to calm the people. The tumult continued, and cries of applause or disapprobation drowned every other sound, till Mirabeau demanded attention. A deputy, M. Goupil, who some time ago had attacked Mirabeau with the cry that Cataline was at their doors, now exclaimed, — "By what right does M. de Mirabeau exercise a dictatorship?" At these words the orator threw himself into the tribune. The president remarked, — "I have not accorded the right to speak; let the assembly decide." The assembly listened. — "I beg my interruptors," said Mirabeau, "to remember that through life I have combated against tyranny, and I will combat it wherever it is to be found." Speaking thus, he turned his eyes from right to left, while applause followed his words; — he continued: — "I beg M. Goupil to remember that not long ago he was mistaken as to the Cataline whose dictatorship he now resists. I beg the assembly to remark that the question of adjournment, simple in appearance, comprehends others, since it supposes that there is a law to form." Murmurs rose from the left; the orator fixed his eyes on the inimical party, and its leaders, Barnave and Lameth. "Silence those thirty voices," he cried: "I am content also to vote for the adjournment, but on condition that no sedition follows."

This was the greatest, and it was the last struggle that Mirabeau had with the jacobins, — his last attempt to stop the progress of that revolution to which he had given form and dignity during its primal struggles. "I would not," he wrote, in a letter meant for the eye of

the king, — "I would not have laboured only at a vast destruction." Thus pledged by his principles and his promises to the court to prop the monarchy, his task was becoming one that demanded more force than, even giant as he was, he possessed. The shades of death cover the probabilities of the future; but it can scarcely be doubted that he must have modified his views, animated the king to a more resolute and popular course, or been swept away in the torrent of blood so soon about to flow.

For some time, incessant labour and excitement undermined his life. The ophthalmias, which had first attacked him in his prison, in Vincennes, were renewed, and he was often obliged to apply leeches to his eyes during the intervals of one day's sitting of the assembly. The sense of disease at work within seemed to him to resemble the effects of poison; and the medicines he took added to, instead of diminishing, his conviction that he was perishing. His last and fatal seizure was accompanied by intense pain and agonising spasms; and the only physician he admitted, who was his friend, began to lose hope. As soon as his illness became publicly known, his house was surrounded by an anxious and mute multitude. In the hour of danger they remembered him as their leader, their preserver, their hope. The bulletins of his progress were seized on with avidity. Louis XVI. sent ostensibly twice a day, and much oftener in secret, to hear how he went on. For a moment, the king and the people appeared united by a common interest, and had a desire of currying favour with the revolutionary party animated the monarch, and induced him to visit the dying man, he had acquired a popularity never to be forgotten. The demagogues feared that he might have been led to such an act; but it was out of character with Louis, who clung longer to the etiquettes than to the reality of royalty.

The last days of Mirabeau were divided between agonising pain and calm and affectionate conversation with his friends. While he hoped to recover, he gave

up all his thoughts to his cure; and even refused to receive his friends, that the remedies might have a fairer chance. But, when he felt the sure approach of death, he was eager to have them around, and talking with them, holding their hands, and looking affectionately on them, found deep enjoyment in the consciousness of their sympathy and love. Already he spoke of himself as dead — with great reluctance he allowed another medical man to be called in, whose remedies proving ineffectual, Mirabeau said, "You are a great physician, but there is one greater than you; he who created the wind that destroys all — the water that penetrates and produces all — the fire that vivifies or decomposes all." He heard with emotion of the demonstrations of affection made by the people. His last hours were marked by mingled philosophy and gaiety: he called his friends about him, and discoursed of himself and public affairs, with a view to futurity after he was gone; he made his will — the legacies of which the count de Lamark, who had been his means of communication with the court, promised should be paid. The visit of his enemy, Barnave, who came in the name of the jacobins to inquire concerning him, afforded him pleasure. He gave M. de Talleyrand a discourse he had prepared for the tribune; and, speaking of Pitt, he said "he is a minister of preparations, and governs by threats: I should have given him some trouble had I lived." He felt the approach of his last hour. "I shall die to-day, my friend," he said, to Cabanis; "no more remains than to crown one's self with flowers, and surround one's self with music, so to pass peacefully into eternal sleep." Hearing the report of cannon, fired for some ceremony, he exclaimed, "Hark! the funeral rites of Achilles are begun!" As he lost his speech, he yet smiled softly and serenely on his friends. The spasms returned with renewed violence. Unable to speak, he wrote, asking, that opium might be given him to appease them; but, before he could take it, he was no more. His death took place on the 20th of April, 1791, at

the age of forty-two. The news quickly spread through the court, the town, the assembly. Every party had placed their hopes in him, and he was mourned by all except such as might envy his fame. On hearing the fatal intelligence, the assembly interrupted its sitting; a general mourning was ordered, and a public funeral.

He was buried in the Pantheon (formerly church of Sainte Geneviève), which had been dedicated "Aux grands hommes la patrie reconnoissante;" and Mirabeau was the first buried there. His funeral took place on the morrow of his death. The ministers and magistrates, the assembly, the army, the municipalities, in short, the members of every public institution, accompanied the procession. He was more numerously and honourably attended, and he was more sincerely mourned, than kings and princes had been, or than any other great man of his own times. During the reign of terror his remains were torn from the tomb, and scattered to the winds, as those of a traitor to the nation.

The peculiarity of Mirabeau, as we before remarked, was the union of great genius with impetuous passions. The last, manifesting themselves in boyhood, in a family which, while the members were remarkable for vehemence in themselves, exacted the most entire filial obedience from their offspring, caused him to be opposed, persecuted, and oppressed. Seventeen *lettres de cachet* had been issued against him, while he felt that his crimes were rather errors in which the public or the state had no concern. Shut up in a narrow fortress or narrower cell, his hatred of tyranny was strongly excited, and he sought in his writings to express it; and, when the occasion offered, he combated it with impetuous eloquence and determined resistance. At that time, aware how much his influence was lessened by the errors of his youth, he had been known, when he felt his progress checked by the disrepute in which his private character was held,

to weep, and to exclaim, "I cruelly expiate the errors of my youth!"

With all his errors he was a warm and kind-hearted man, and gifted with undaunted courage. During his political career, his enemies were perpetually endeavouring to embroil him in duels, which he avoided without the most distant suspicion of cowardice being attached to him. He was a man of wit, and many of his sayings are recorded. They are often bitter epigrams on his enemies, and inspired by hatred rather than truth. He called the virtuous La Fayette Grandison-Cromwell; and said of him that he had *bien sauté pour reculer*, as his latter conduct did not come up to his first entrance on life when he went to America. He was the implacable enemy of Necker, who, he says, was "a clock always too slow." While speaking in the national assembly, he pointed to a picture, emblemising Time, with his scythe and his hour-glass always full, exclaiming, "We have taken his scythe, but we have forgotten his time-piece." Of the national assembly he said, "It has Hannibals in plenty, and needs a Fabius." It was the fashion to call Clermont-Tonnerre the Pitt of France: "As you please," said Mirabeau; "but how would Pitt like to be called the Clermont-Tonnerre of England?" His faculty of wit rose sometimes into grandeur. When he spoke of the convulsions that would ensue on the entire overthrow of the monarchy, he cried, "You will have assassinations and massacres; but you will never rise to the execrable height of a civil war." Talleyrand said that he dramatised his death. It is a strange moment for vanity to become paramount; and the chief trait of his death-bed was his gentleness and serenity, and the affection he showed to his friends. Politics occupied him at times; and he said to those about him, "Après ma mort, les factieux se partagéront les lambeaux de la monarchie."

The great quality of his mind was the power of seizing on any word or idea presented to him, and reproducing it at the right moment, with such vigour and

fire as made it omnipotent. It was the eagle eye that enabled him on the instant to discern the right path, or the commanding idea, and to express it with force and majesty. With a lion heart, untiring perseverance, and the strength of a giant, he swept away opposition, inspired confidence, and fixed his standard far within the ranks of the enemy, where none dared touch it.

So well could he adapt his very ugliness, his flashing eyes, abundant hair, and marks of physical power, to the sentiments which he expressed, that an actor on hearing him speak in the tribune exclaimed, "Ah! what a pity he was born a gentleman; he has missed his vocation!" He was greater as an orator than a leader. But each day he lived he advanced in the science of party strife. At the last, when he contemplated an organised opposition to the jacobins, he became expert; but it may be believed that he would have found an insuperable obstacle to success in the passions of the people.

In early life his misfortunes arose from not having embarked in a fitting career. As a military man, a century before, as a marshal under Louis XIV., he had replaced Turenne; a few years later, he might have emulated Napoleon. As it was, had he been allowed to seek active service in the army, his turbulence had found vent in the midst of hardship and danger — a general would have been given to his country. Another school was needed to form the leader of the revolution: the exasperation engendered by tyranny, the resolution born in the solitude of a dungeon, the ambition nurtured by contempt of inferior men — all that had quelled a feebler man — gave force and direction to his passions, perception and enthusiasm to his genius, and made that Mirabeau, whom his countrymen regard as one of the greatest of their leaders, and whose name is a light that burns inextinguishably amidst the glory that illustrated the commencement of the French revolution.

MADAME ROLAND.

1754—1793.

Madame Roland, strictly speaking, can scarcely be classed among persons of literary reputation. Her fame rests even on higher and nobler grounds than that of those who toil with the brain for the instruction of their fellow creatures. She acted. What she wrote is more the emanation of the active principle, which, pent in a prison, betook itself to the only implement, the pen, left to wield, than an exertion of the reflective portion of the mind. The composition of her memoirs was the last deed of her life, save the leaving it — and it was a noble one — disclosing the nature of the soil that gave birth to so much virtue; teaching women how to be great, without foregoing either the duties or charms of their sex; and exhibiting to men an example of feminine excellence, from which they may gather confidence, that if they dedicate themselves to useful and heroic tasks, they will find helpmates in the other sex to sustain them in their labours and share their fate.

In giving the life of this admirable woman, we have at once the advantage and disadvantage of drawing the details of her early years from her autobiography. We are thus secure from false statements and meagre conjecture; but our pages must appear cold and vapid, as containing only an abridgment of details which she recounts with a glowing pen. Under these circumstances, it is better to refer the reader to her work for minutia, and to confine ourselves to results; and instead of lingering over a dry statement of facts, to seek for the formation of character, and to give a rapid view of the causes of her greatness; and to find what was the position and education of a woman who, in a country usually noted for frivolity and display, exhibited simplicity

joined to elevation of character and strength of mind, of which few examples can be found in the history of the world.

Manon Phlipon was of bourgeoise, and even humble, though respectable birth. Her father was an engraver; he had a slight knowledge of the fine arts, and wished to become an enamel painter: he failed in this as well as in an after attempt to enrich himself by trading in jewels, which brought on his ruin. During the early years of his daughter he was well to do, and employed several workmen under him. His wife was refined in character, and might have hoped for a partner of a more delicate and enlightened mind; but her sense of duty and sweetness of temper reconciled her to her lot. Manon was the second of seven children, but the only one who survived infancy. She was put out to be nursed by a peasant in the country, as was the practice in those days, and returned home when two years old, to pass the remainder of her girlhood beneath the parental roof, under the care of her gentle and excellent mother, who found it an easy task to regulate the disposition of one whose earliest characteristic was sensibility. "While I remained in my peaceful home," she writes of herself, "my natural sensibility so engrossed every quality, that no other displayed itself — my first desire was to please and to do good." Naturally serious and fond of occupation, she loved reading from infancy; books and flowers were her earliest passion; and as she records this in her prison, torn from all she loved, expecting the death to which those about her were being led by turns, "still," she says, "I can forget the injustice of men and my sufferings among books and flowers."

Every sort of master was given her by her fond parents, and she applied herself with an ardour and a delight that led her instructors to prolong her lessons, and to take deep interest in teaching her. Her father, who had no idea of education except by reprimand and punishment, was soon led to cease to interfere in the guidance of her conduct; he caressed her, taught her to paint,

and showed her every kindness; while the cultivation of her mind and heart was left to her mother, who found it easy to lead her by appeals to her reason or her feelings. Passionately fond of reading, she seized on books wherever she could find them: there were not many in her father's house, but Plutarch fell into her hands at nine years old, and more delighted her than all the fairy tales she had ever read; she drank in republicanism even then. Her imagination and her heart were warmed meanwhile by reading Fénélon and Tasso. As she remarks, had she had indiscreet companions, this early development of feeling might have led to an untimely awakening of passion; but under the shelter of her mother, with her only for a companion, her heart sympathised with the emotions of others, without any reference to herself — occupation and innocence protected her.

She lived in all the simplicity that belonged to a tradesman easy in his means. The bourgeoisie of Paris of those days were a remarkable class. They detested and despised the debauchery of the noblesse, and the servility of their parasites; while they held themselves far above the brutal ignorance and licentiousness of the populace. The women of this class passed laborious and secluded lives, enlivened only by the enjoyments their vanity might gather on days of festivals, when they showed off their fine clothes and pretty faces in the public promenades. The habits of this class, as madame Roland describes them from experience, were remarkable for frugality. She accompanied her mother to market—occasionally she was sent alone, which she thought somewhat derogatory—but did not complain. There was but one servant, and sometimes she assisted in the kitchen; at the same time, the fondness of her mother displayed itself by dressing her elegantly and richly on Sundays and visiting days. Dancing, in which she excelled, was among her accomplishments. Her mother was pious: by degrees the sensibility of her character found a vent for itself in religion. The first

time she left her mother's roof was, at her own request, to prepare herself in a convent to receive her first communion. During her retreat she formed a friendship with a young companion. After leaving the convent, their intercourse continued by letters; and this, she tells us, was the origin of her love of writing, and caused her, by exercise, to acquire facility.

After passing a year in the convent, she passed another with her paternal grandmother, and then she returned to her father's roof. Her days were chiefly passed in study; her meditative mind speculated on all she read; her mother permitted her to read every book that fell in her way, and the self-taught girl preferred philosophical works to every other; she thus enlarged the sphere of her ideas; formed opinions, and erected rigid rules of morality as her guide. The severe principles of Pascal and the writers of the Port-Royal had a great attraction for her ardent mind; and when she sought in philosophy for principles of equal self-denial, she endeavoured to adopt the system of the stoics. All that ennobled the soul and exalted the moral feeling attracted her. She was dispirited when she turned to the pages of modern French philosophy. The theories of Helvetius saddened her, till she was relieved by the consideration that his narrow and derogatory view of human motive and action was applicable only to the corrupt state of society such as he found it in France. She believed that she ought to study this author as a guide in the depraved world of Paris; but she rejected his doctrines as explanatory of the movements of the human soul in a virtuous simple state of society; she felt herself superior to the principle of self which he made the law of our nature; she contrasted it with the heroic acts of antiquity, and thus she became enthusiastically attached to those republics in which virtue flourished; she became persuaded that freedom was the parent of heroes; she regretted that her lot had not been cast among such, and disdained the idea of associating with the corrupt race of her day. The aspirations after the examples set

by the great, the virtuous, the generous, and the wise, which she thus nourished, gave a charm to her solitary life; but her studies excited far other feelings when she was led to remark how little they accorded with the state of society in France.

Sometimes she was taken to visit certain ladies who claimed to be noble, and who, looking upon her as an inferior, sent her to dine with their servants. Once she paid a visit of eight days at Versailles, and witnessed the routine of a court. How different were the impertinent pretensions of these silly women, and the paltry pomp of royalty, from the majesty of the solitary reveries in which she associated with the heroes and philosophers of old! Her soul rejected distinctions of rank such as she found them in her own country, — empty in themselves, as far as regarded real excellence, and degrading to her in her position, — and she hurried back to take her proper place in creation, not the humble daughter of an obscure mechanic, but one whose mind was refined by philosophy, enlarged by knowledge; whose heart beat with generous impulses, and who already felt her bosom swell with the heroism which her future actions displayed. "I sighed," she writes, "as I thought of Athens, where I could have equally admired the fine arts, without being wounded by the spectacle of despotism; I transported myself in thought to Greece — I was present at the Olympic games, and I grew angry at finding myself French. Thus, struck by all of grand which is offered by the republics of antiquity, I forgot the death of Socrates, the exile of Aristides, the sentence of Phocion; I did not know that heaven had reserved it to me to witness errors similar to those of which they were the victims, and to participate in a similar persecution, after having professed similar principles."

She regarded the position she held in society with bitterness. Vain of her accomplishments and knowledge, proud in the consciousness of her integrity and of the lofty meditations in which she indulged, the condescension of the petty noblesse towards the daughter of an

artisan made her bosom swell with haughty emotion. She does not disguise that this feeling caused her to hail the revolution with greater transport.

It is usual to accuse the lowly of envy, so to cast a slur over their motives when they espouse with enthusiasm the cause of freedom. In all societies there must be difference of position, arising from the distribution of property, and no passion is more mean than that which causes the poor to view with envy the luxuries and ease of the rich. But the disdain which springs from knowing that others assume superiority from mere adventitious circumstances—that there is an impassable barrier, on the outer side of which the ignobly born must remain, vainly desiring a career in which to distinguish themselves — is a noble feeling, and is implanted in the human heart as the source of the highest virtues. Human weakness mingled, probably, some pettiness in the pride of the beautiful and studious bourgeoise, but she knew how to rise above it; and when she sealed her ambition with her blood, she proved that it was honourable, and that her desire of distinction was founded on a generous love of the good of her species.

The only child of a prosperous artisan, it was supposed that she was an heiress: this idea, joined to her personal attractions, elicited numerous pretensions to her hand, and her indulgent parents conceded to her the privilege of replying to them. Her sensibility was great, and she looked on wedded life as the source of every felicity; but this very notion made her scrupulous in her choice. The young men of the quarter passed in review before her, and were, one after the other, rejected. A little hesitation ensued when a physician proposed—she hoped for more refinement and knowledge in one of the learned professions. In the end, he also was refused. —her heart continued untouched; she would have been glad if any one had appeared whom she could have looked upon as worthy of her; but, as this did not happen, she rejoiced to escape the proposed shackles, and turned to her peaceful studious home, the

affection of her mother, and the attachment of her friends, with renewed delight. The account she gives of the many proposals she received, and the way in which they were finally dismissed, is one of the most amusing portions of her book, and affords a pleasant and vivid picture of the French system with regard to marriages.

Her mother's health became enfeebled, and this excellent parent regarded her daughter's future prospects with anxiety. Phlipon had become careless in his business; his customers deserted him, his speculations failed; he grew fond of pleasure, and habits of industry were thrown aside. His wife was aware of the advances of poverty, and of the slight confidence she could place in her husband; she reasoned with her daughter, and tried to persuade her to accept the offer of a young jeweller, who had youth and good habits to recommend him; but Manon shrunk from uniting herself with one whom she could not regard as the sharer of her studies nor the guide of her conduct.

Her mother died suddenly of paralysis. Madame Roland gives a vivid picture of the affliction she felt on this event, which conducted her to the brink of the grave. It was long before she could be roused from the intense grief that overwhelmed both mind and body. She became incapable of application, and struggled in vain to cast off the melancholy that made her a burden to herself and others. By degrees, her regrets grew less passionate and more tender. At this moment a friend, abbé Legrand, put the "Nouvelle Heloise" into her hands,—it succeeded in exciting her attention, and in calling her thoughts from her loss. "I was twenty-one," she says, "and Rousseau made the same impression on me then as Plutarch had done when I was eight. Plutarch had disposed me to republicanism,—he had awakened the energy and pride which are its characteristics; he inspired me with a true enthusiasm for public virtue and freedom. Rousseau showed me domestic happiness and the ineffable felicity I was capable

of tasting." From this time, she returned to her quiet routine of life, her studies, and her habits of observation. "I was placed," she says, "in solitude, but on the borders of society, and could remark much without being intruded on." Several men of letters interested themselves in her, and delighted in her society. Finding that she was in the habit of writing her remarks, some among them prognosticated that she would become an author; but she had no inclination to seek publicity in that manner. "I soon saw," she says, "that an authoress loses more than she gains. My chief object was my own happiness, and I never knew the public interfere with that for any one without spoiling it. There is nothing more delightful than to be appreciated by those with whom one lives, and nothing so empty as the admiration of those whom we are never to meet." Other cares, however, intruded themselves; she saw that her father's fortune was wasting away, and anticipated ruin for him and poverty for herself. He was young and dissipated, and might marry again. Meanwhile, he was never at home, and interfered in her life only to annoy her, without affording the paternal protection or domestic society that she needed. She felt that her situation grew precarious, and the energy of her character determined her to meet rather than await the evil. She secured to herself a scanty income of about 25*l.* a year from the wreck of her father's fortune, and retired on it to a convent. She rented a small room in the congregation, and established herself in her retreat, determined to limit her wants to her means. Her plan demanded unflinching resolution, and this she displayed. Her food was simple, and prepared by herself. She only went out to visit her relations, and cast a careful eye over her father's household. The rest of her time was spent in her little solitary chamber. She gave herself up to study, and fortified her heart against adversity, determined to deserve the happiness which fate denied her.

She at this time by no means foresaw the course of life she was destined to pursue, although she was already acquainted with her future husband. M. Roland de la Platiere, belonged to a family of Lyons, distinguished in what the French call the robe; that is, by having filled with credit legal employments. As the youngest of five sons, he was destined for the ecclesiastical profession; to avoid which, he left the paternal roof at the age of nineteen, and, alone and almost penniless, traversed France to Nantes, with the intention of embarking for India. He was dissuaded by a stranger to whom he had applied for information with regard to his projected voyage, who interested himself in his fate, and saw that he was too weakly in health to encounter the hardships of emigration. He found employment in the administration of manufactures at Rouen and Amiens. He possessed great simplicity and integrity of character; he loved study, and applied himself sedulously to gathering knowledge with regard to the manufactories of which he had the superintendence. He wrote several works that treated of such subjects. He was a man generally esteemed for his sound plain sense; his austere and simple manners inspired confidence, though he was more respected than loved on account of a certain coldness of character that repelled. He was known to Sophie, Mlle. Phlipon's convent friend; he heard her speak of her correspondent with admiration, and often asked to be allowed to make acquaintance with her during his yearly visit to Paris. At length, Sophie gave him an introduction. "This letter," she wrote, "will be delivered to you by the philosopher I have often mentioned, M. Roland de la Platiere, an enlightened and excellent man, who can only be reproached for his great admiration of the ancients at the expense of the moderns, whom he despises, and his weakness in liking to talk too much about himself." Mlle. Phlipon liked him better than this sketch promised. His manners were a little cold and stiff; he was careless in dress, and no longer

1775. Ætat. 23.

youthful either in years or appearance; but she discerned and appreciated his simplicity and benevolence of character. He took pleasure in the society of the serious and reflective recluse, and paid her long though not frequent visits. His age prevented any idea of impropriety on the score of his being an admirer, add to which her father, while he ran after pleasure himself, left his daughter to pursue her way without interference. Roland was about to make a tour in Italy. He chose his new friend as the depositary of his manuscripts, and, before he departed, introduced to her his brother, a benedictine, prior of the college of Clugny at Paris. Through the intervention of this brother she saw the letters and observations that Roland sent from Italy. On his return, they continued friends; his conversation was a great resource to her, while the habit he indulged of seeing her often, at last rendered her society necessary to him, and love—slow and chill, but of deep growth—arose in his heart. Five years after the commencement of their acquaintance he disclosed his sentiments. She was flattered by the proposal—his good birth during the old regime was a tangible good, to which she was by no means insensible, but her pride led her to represent to him that she was a bad match — her family ignoble, and she herself, instead of being an heiress, ruined through her father's imprudence. Roland persisted in his address, and she permitted him to apply to her only surviving parent, which he did by letter from Amiens. Phlipon did not like his austerity, and was not pleased by the tone of his letter; thinking only of his own feelings, and without consulting his daughter, he sent a rejection couched in rude and even impertinent terms.

His daughter, when informed of what he had done, was a good deal shocked; for the last few months she had looked on Roland as her future husband, and attached herself to him. She wrote to him saying, that the event had justified her fears with regard to her father, and that he had better abandon his pursuit. At the same time she resolved to render herself independent—that if Roland

persisted, he should not again be annoyed. It was on this occasion that she retired to a convent, and bound herself to subsist on the scanty income which was all that she possessed. At first Roland wrote to complain of her father's treatment, and though still expressing attachment, appeared to regard the paternal rejection as putting an end to his hopes. Six months afterwards he visited Paris; the sight of his friend at the convent grate renewed the feelings which absence and disappointment had blunted; he pressed his offer, and sent his brother, the benedictine, to persuade her. "I reflected deeply," she writes, "on what I ought to do. I could not conceal from myself that a younger man would not have delayed, for several months, entreating me to change my resolution, and I confess that this circumstance had deprived my feelings of every illusion. I considered, on the other hand, that this deliberation was an assurance that I was appreciated; and that if he had overcome his pride, which shrunk from the disagreeable circumstances that accompanied his marrying me, I was the more secure of an esteem I could not fail to preserve. In short, if marriage was, as I thought, an austere union, an association in which the woman usually burdens herself with the happiness of two individuals, it were better that I should exert my abilities and my courage in so honourable a task, than in the solitude in which I lived."

1780. Ætat. 26. With these feelings she married. Of a passionate and ardent disposition, she devoted herself to a life of self-control; and, resolved to find her happiness in the fulfilment of her duty, she delivered herself up with enthusiasm and without reserve to the task she undertook. She was her husband's friend, companion, amanuensis; fearful of the temptations of the world, she gave herself up to labour; she soon became absolutely necessary to him at every moment, and in all the incidents of his life; her servitude was thus sealed; now and then it caused a sigh; but the holy sense of duty reconciled her to every inconvenience.

She visited Switzerland and England. In this country her husband's connection with the scientific world led her to the society she best liked. They then took up their abode at the family residence of Clos la Platiére near Lyons, with her husband's mother and elder brother. Madame Roland had one child, a little girl;—to educate her; to render her husband happy; to spread the charm of peace and love around, and in the midst of this to cultivate in her own pure mind the most elevated as well as the gentle virtues; to be useful to their peasantry, and mitigate as well as she could the many hardships to which the poor in France were exposed; —this was the scope of her life, and the entire prospect spread out before her. Her husband had so little expectation of change, that he endeavoured to get his right to letters of nobility acknowledged, as, madame Roland observes, "who would not have done the same in those days?" The time was apparently far off when it could be of general good to reject the privileges of class; and these privileges were so great that the sphere of usefulness was considerably extended to any one who possessed them. Failing in this attempt, the republican pair sometimes deliberated emigrating to America, that they might there enjoy equal institutions, and the sight of public happiness and prosperity. The age of M. Roland was an insurmountable obstacle, however, to this plan.

Her letters, during this period, afford a picture of her mind; showing her love of duty and of study; her enjoyment of the beauties of nature, and, above all, the warm affectionateness of her disposition, which made her supremely happy in the happiness of others, and caused her to share, with tender sympathy, all the joys or sorrows of those she loved. Her husband's relations were disagreeable, but she bore the interference that prevented her living exactly in the manner she preferred with an unruffled temper. She tolerated every fault in others, and secluded herself to secure her liberty: she never repines. "Seated in my chimney corner," she

1786. Ætat. 32.

writes to M. Bosc, "at eleven before noon, after a peaceful night and my morning tasks — my husband at his desk, and my little girl knitting — I am conversing with the former, and overlooking the work of the latter; enjoying the happiness of being warmly sheltered in the bosom of my dear little family, and writing to a friend, while the snow is falling on so many poor wretches overwhelmed by sorrow and penury. I grieve over their fate, I repose on my own, and make no account of those family annoyances which appeared formerly to tarnish my felicity. — I am delighted at being restored to my accustomed way of existence." This country life was alternated by visits to Lyons, where Roland had employment, where she mingled in society; but the provincial tone that reigned was little consonant with her taste.

The revolution came in the midst of this peaceful existence, to give new life and expression to opinions which she had hitherto considered as merely theoretical, and for which no scope for practice had been afforded in the state of society before that epoch. All at once, from out of ancient wrong and tyranny, from the midst of the great miseries and intolerable oppressions which her country groaned under, the spirit of justice, of redress, and of freedom, sprung up. It seemed, at first, to every strong and honest mind, that France would throw off outworn, yet still subsisting and oppressive, abuses, and grow wise, virtuous, and happy, under the fosterage of liberty and equality.

How gladly her soul hailed these hopes! Soon she found that they were accompanied by fears, and that the popular party grew insolent and despotic in prosperity. "Is the question to be whether we have one tyrant or a hundred," she writes, and she became eager to ally herself to the liberal, but constitutional, party, by which freedom would be secured, without anarchy or public convulsion.

1789. Ætat. 35. Almost immediately on the breaking out of the revolution, her husband was elected into the municipality

of Lyons. His integrity and firmness, and his attachment to the popular party, of course excited many enemies; but he was immovable in his course, and denounced all the abuses which had multiplied in the administration of the finances of the city. It was discovered that Lyons had 40,000,000 of livres of debt; the manufactories, meanwhile, were suffering, during a period of popular ferment, and 20,000 workmen were thrown out of employ. It was necessary to represent these things to the national assembly, and to ask for aid. Roland was charged with this mission.

Madame Roland had not visited Paris for five years. 1791. Ætat. 37. She was familiar with the names of the heads of the various parties, and a commerce of letters and civilities had had place between her husband and Brissot, chief of the girondists. He visited them, and her house became the rendezvous of his party. Her talents, beauty, and enthusiasm, produced an effect of which she was scarcely aware herself, and which the party itself rather felt than acknowledged. "Roland," writes Thiers, in his "History of the French Revolution," "was known for his clever writings on manufactures and mechanics. This man, of austere life, inflexible principles, and cold repulsive manners, yielded, without being aware, to the superior ascendancy of his wife. Madame Roland was young and beautiful. Nourished in seclusion by philosophical and republican sentiments, she had conceived ideas superior to her sex, and had erected a strict religion from the then reigning opinions. Living in intimate friendship with her husband, she wrote for him, communicated her vivacity and ardour, not only to him but to all the girondists, who, enthusiastic in the cause of liberty and philosophy, adored beauty, and talent, and their own opinions, in her." She, meanwhile, did all she could to render her influence covert. She might converse with energy and freedom with the different members of the party during their chance visits; but when they assembled in her house to discuss present proceedings and future prospects, she was present, but

maintained silence. Apart from the deliberators, occupied by needlework, or writing letters, she listened, nor interfered till, the conference breaking up, she could in privacy, and without ostentation, express her sentiments to them individually. This reserve caused all her friends to speak of her with respect, and yet to discuss their opinions eagerly with her. She had the fault, in which those who are wedded to opinions are apt to indulge, of preferring the men who agreed with her, who hated royalty and courts, and aimed at equality and republicanism, to those of superior endowments and virtues, but who differed from her. Discontented at the same time with the talents of the former, she found most of the men thus collected about her far below the estimate she had formed at a distance: they talked at random; they had no fixed plan; theoretical rather than practical, they could make paper constitutions, but knew little how to deal with their fellow men during the clash of interests, and the tempest of revolutionary passions. She had none of the vanity that seeks to shine in conversation, and grew impatient when witty sallies and argumentative discussions, instead of serious resolves and heroic acts, occupied her friends.

Roland's mission retained them at Paris for seven months. They were months crowded with events pregnant with the fate of France. Madame Roland, in her letters to her friend, Henri Brancal, then in London, paints the various events, and the sentiments they inspired. She was a warm partisan of liberty and equality, and mourned over the lukewarmness of the national assembly on these great questions; or, rather, the number of the moderate party who wished to assimilate the government of France to the English constitution. To prevent the extension of these views, the jacobins agitated and excited the people. Madame Roland at first approved their measures: she saw no safety for the newly acquired freedom of her country, except in the enthusiasm by which it was defended by the many. She had to learn, through tragical experience, how much

more difficult it is to restrain than to excite the French. Her letters breathe impatience and disapprobation with regard to the actual state of things. "Represent to yourself," she writes, "a number of good citizens carrying on a perpetual, active, painful, and often fruitless struggle with the mass of the ambitious, the discontented, and the ignorant." The flight of the king filled her with alarm, mingled with enthusiasm, as she saw danger approach herself and her friends; danger to proceed from the triumph of despotism—she could not then imagine that any would arise from freedom. "While we were at peace," she writes, "I kept in the back ground, and exercised only the sort of influence suited to my sex; but, when the departure of the king declared war, it appeared to me that every one ought to devote himself without reserve. I caused myself to be received in fraternal associations, persuaded that the zeal and intelligence of any member of society must be useful in critical moments." The arrest and return of the king and his family kindled a thousand hopes. "It would be a folly, an absurdity, almost a horror," she writes, "to replace the king on the throne. To bring Louis XVI. to trial would doubtless be the greatest and most just of measures; but we are incapable of adopting it." Little did she anticipate the progress of events.

Meanwhile the project of her party was to suspend the king from exercising the royal functions. It must be remembered that we, from a distance, judge Louis from facts, as history records them: then, when events were passing, no one could fairly judge the other; and while the French expected invasion, and saw in the flight of their king the infraction of the oath he had taken to maintain the constitution, those attached to it regarded him as a traitor. Madame Roland sided with those who regarded his dethronement as the safety of France, and the erection of a republic as the promise of its welfare. She thought that both were imminent. "I have seen," she writes, "the flame of liberty lit up in my country; it cannot be quenched, and late events have

served as fuel; knowledge and reason are united to instinct to maintain and augment it; it must devour the last remains of despotism, and subvert thrones. I shall die when nature pleases, and my last sigh will be a breathing of joy and hope for the generations to come." The tumults, however, that succeeded seemed to crush these hopes. Brissot fell into disrepute: there was an endeavour to crush the republican party, which, in the moment of danger, had been willing to ally itself to the most violent jacobins. In the midst of this agitation and tumult the mission of Roland came to a close, and he prepared to leave Paris. The elections were about to commence, and he was candidate for Lyons, but was not elected. The autumn, therefore, was spent in the country. Madame Roland was evidently dispirited by the obscurity of her life and absence from the scene of action. "I see with regret," she writes, "that my husband is cast back on silence and obscurity. He is habituated to public life: it is more necessary to him than he is himself aware; his energy and activity injure his health when not exercised according to his inclinations: in addition, I had hoped for great advantages for my child in a residence at Paris. Occupied there by her education, I should have excited and developed some sort of talent. The recluse life I must lead here makes me tremble for her. From the moment that my husband has no occupation but his desk, I must remain near to amuse him, and diversify his daily labours, according to a duty and a habit which may not be eluded. This existence is in exact contradiction to that suitable to a child of ten years of age. My heart is saddened by this opposition of duties, already too deeply felt. I find myself fallen into the nullity of a provincial life, where no exterior circumstances supply that which I cannot do myself, and a dark veil falls over the future. If I believed that my husband were satisfied, it would be otherwise; hope would embellish the prospect. However, our destiny is fixed, and I must try to render it as happy as I can."

The discontent of madame Roland was natural to her ardent disposition. She desired to be great, not for the sake of riches, or even power; but to have scope afforded her to exercise those virtues which, nourished in solitude, and excited by important events, inflamed her heart to enthusiasm. She wished to be great as her favourites in Plutarch were great: she did not look forward to actual peril, but to a life of activity and usefulness on a grand scale, and to be numbered among those whose names were to be recorded in future history as the parents of the liberty of her country.

In the December of the same year they returned to Paris, and in the following March, a new ministry being formed from the girondist party, Roland was named minister for the interior. It was a post of honour, but heavily burdened with responsibility. Dumouriez, then fluctuating, attracted by a court that flattered, yet desirous of conciliating his own party, was minister for foreign affairs. At first Roland felt assured of the good dispositions of the king towards the new state of things. "I could not believe," writes his wife, "in the constitutional vocation of a monarch born under a despotism, brought up for it, and accustomed to exercise it; and I never saw my husband leave me to attend council, full of reliance on the good intentions of the king, but I exclaimed, in my heart, 'What new folly will now be committed!'" She goes on pleasantly to relate the surprise excited at court, when Roland appeared in his quaker-like costume, his round hat, and his shoes tied with riband. The master of the ceremonies pointed him out to Dumouriez, with an angry and agitated mien, exclaiming — "Ah! sir,—no buckles to his shoes!" "Ah! sir," replied Dumouriez, with mock solemnity, "all is lost!" 1792. Ætat. 38.

We have no space for the details of Roland's ministry, nor the events then passing. The king had undertaken the difficult game of satisfying his enemies by slight concessions and apparent good humour; but he refused to sanction a severe decree against the clergy, which

their inveterate opposition to the party in power rendered necessary in the eyes of the lovers of liberty; and another to establish a camp of 20,000 volunteers to protect the assembly and the capital, during a grand federative assembly to be held during the summer. It was projected to address a letter to the king, on this refusal, in the name of all the ministers: but they declined presenting it. Madame Roland insisted that her husband should singly remonstrate with the monarch, and he resolved on so doing. She wrote the letter. It was one calculated to irritate rather than to persuade Louis; but she liked bold measures, and Roland, once persuaded, was obstinate. The girondists wished, in fact, to bring the king to an explanation, and preferred a rupture to uncertainty. Some obstacles arising to Roland's reading his letter to the king, he sent it to him; but this was not enough; and he took a speedy occasion to read it aloud in full council, and to force the king to hear the rebukes and remonstrances it contained. Louis listened with admirable patience, and, on retiring, said he would make known his intentions. On the following day, Roland and two of his more zealous colleagues were dismissed, while Dumouriez took on himself to reform the ministry.

It was certainly a bold, and, if not beneficial, a presumptuous act in a woman thus to put herself forward during these political agitations. Madame Roland hated monarchical institutions, and her desire to subvert them in her own country partook of the vehemence with which women too usually follow up their ideas. She had always been accustomed to copy and arrange her husband's writings. At first she did this servilely: by degrees she emancipated herself from the task of being a mere copyist. The pair were agreed in views, opinions, and plans of action. There was a driness and hardness in Roland's writings that did not please her more demonstrative nature. When he became minister, they conferred together as to the spirit of any proposed writing, and then she, who could better command

leisure, took up the pen. "I could not express any thing," she writes, "that regarded reason or justice, which he was not capable of realising or maintaining by his character and conduct; while I expressed better than he could whatever he had done or promised to do. Without my intervention Roland had been an equally good agent: his activity and knowledge, as well as his probity, were all his own; but he produced a greater sensation through me, since I put into his writings that mixture of energy and gentleness, of authority and persuasion, which is peculiar to a woman of a warm heart and a clear head. I wrote with delight such pieces as I thought would be useful, and I took greater pleasure in them than I should have done had I been their acknowledged author."

Of the letter itself, we may say that it is eloquent, but very ill judged, if it was meant to conciliate the king; but it was not. It was written in a spirit of contempt for Louis's conduct; of menace, if he did not pass the decrees; and of sturdy independence and republicanism as far as regarded the minister himself. It naturally alienated the monarch; but Roland and his wife were too enthusiastically attached to the cause of liberty and equality, not to glory in expressing their sentiments openly and boldly at the foot of the throne, even at the expense of loss of office. On this event they secluded themselves in private life, living in an obscure and modest abode in Rue St. Jaques. They mingled in no intrigues, while they deplored the misfortunes of their country, being persuaded that the king and his friends were about to call in foreign troops to destroy its new-born liberty.

After the events of the 10th of August, Roland was recalled to the ministry. He and his wife, both hating monarchy, could not understand why the ruins of it in France should not at once be cast aside, and a republic erected on the vacant space. Hitherto they had feared monarchical reaction; add to which many of the tumults in the preceding months had been fomented by the court

party under the idea that popular outrage would cause a return to loyal feeling among the moderate party. The fear of the success of the court had made them, together with Barbaroux and Servan, consult how far it would be possible to found a republic in the south of France, if monarchy triumphed in the north. There was no fear of this now: Louis XVI. was dethroned and imprisoned; and the lovers of their country witnessed a more frightful scene than any that had yet stained its annals, when the more violent jacobins, who went by the name of the Mountain, excited the people to fury, so to maintain their own power. Marat, Robespierre, and Danton were beginning their reign of terror.

At the beginning of September, during the massacres in the prisons, madame Roland wrote to Blancal, "We are under the knife of Robespierre and Marat. These men agitate the people, and endeavour to turn them against the national assembly and the council: they have a little army, which they pay with money stolen from the Tuileries, or which is given them by Danton, who, underhand, is the chief. Would you believe that they meditated the arrest of Brissot and Roland? Had the arrest been executed, these two excellent citizens had been taken to the abbey and massacred with the rest. We are not yet secure; and, if the departments do not send a guard for the assembly and the council, both will be lost." Again she wrote, "My friend, Danton leads all; Robespierre is his puppet; Marat holds his torch and dagger: this ferocious tribune reigns, and we are his slaves until the moment when we shall become his victims. If you only knew the frightful details of what is going on. You are aware of my enthusiasm for the revolution; well, I am ashamed of it: it is deformed by monsters, and become hideous. What may happen within a week? it is degrading to remain, but we are not allowed to quit Paris: they shut us in to murder us when occasion serves." From this moment madame Roland struggled unflinchingly to overthrow the power of the jacobins. Her ill success conducted her to the scaffold.

The moderation and opposition of the girondists rendered them hateful to the mountain, and every endeavour was made to excite the Parisians against them. They cast on Roland the stigma of being governed by his wife. When it was proposed in the national assembly to invite him to resume the ministry, Garat said, "We had better invite madame; she is the real minister." They accused her of using every feminine art to secure partisans. These were the mere calumnies of the day, powerful for her ruin, but not tarnishing her after-glory. Every impartial pen describes her as carrying her simplicity and grace into her political enthusiasm, and charming even those whom she did not convince.

Le Montey writes of her—"I met madame Roland several times in former days: her eyes, her figure, and hair were of remarkable beauty; her delicate complexion had a freshness and colour which, joined to her reserved yet ingenuous appearance, imparted a singular air of youth. She spoke, too, well, yet there was no affectation in what she said; it was merely nature carried to a great degree of perfection. Wit, good sense, propriety of expression, keen reasoning, *naïve* grace, all flowed without effort from her roseate lips. I saw madame Roland once again at the commencement of her husband's first ministry. She had lost nothing of her air of freshness, youth, and simplicity: her husband resembled a quaker, and she looked like his daughter. Her child flitted about her with ringlets reaching to her waist. Madame Roland spoke of public affairs only, and I perceived that my moderation inspired pity. Her mind was highly excited, but her heart remained gentle and inoffensive. Although the monarchy was not yet overthrown, she did not conceal that symptoms of anarchy began to appear, and she declared herself ready to resist them to the death. I remember the calm and resolute tone in which she declared that she was ready, if need were, to place her head on the block. I confess that the image of that charming head delivered over to the axe of the execu-

tioner made an ineffaceable impression — for party excesses had not yet accustomed us to such frightful ideas. Thus, in the sequel, the prodigious firmness of madame Roland and her heroic death did not surprise me. All was in harmony, nor was there any affectation in this celebrated woman: she had not only the strongest but the truest mind of our revolution."

Dumont writes of her — "Madame Roland had every personal attraction, joined to excellence of character and understanding. I saw many assemblies of ministers, and the principal girondists, held at her house. A woman seemed somewhat out of place among them; but she did not mingle in the discussions: she usually sat at her desk, writing letters, and appeared to be occupied by other things, while she did not lose a word. Her modest style of dress did not lessen her attractions, and, though her occupations were those of a man, she was really adorned by all the grace and exterior accomplishments of her sex. I reproach myself now that I did not perceive then the full extent of her merit; but I was rather prejudiced against female politicians; and I found in her a too great tendency to mistrust, which springs from want of knowledge of the world."

The influence of earnestness, sincerity, and clear views were great over her husband and his party. If she had, from a rooted disapprobation of royalty, urged him to any extremities with Louis, not less did she abhor anarchy, and fearlessly incite him to oppose it.

During the frightful massacres of the 2d and 3d of September Roland displayed an energy and heroism worthy of the woman who was said to be the soul of his counsels. On the 3d, while terror still reigned, he wrote to the mayor, Petion, who was in ignorance of the atrocities that were going on, and to Santerre, who remained in ignominious inaction, pressing them earnestly to come forward. He addressed a letter also to the assembly, in which he fearlessly denounced the crimes of the people; offering his own head as the sacrifice, but calling on the authorities to suppress the massacres.

The assembly applauded the letter ; while Marat and his partisans denounced him as a traitor, and issued an arrest against him. Danton, whose views were more systematic, intervened, and prevented an act which at that time had injured the jacobins more than the party against whom it was directed.

Roland was not awed by the danger he incurred. When, on the 23d of September, he gave in a report on the state of the capital and of France, he described the disorders of Paris with energy, and insisted on their causes, and the means of preventing a recurrence of them. His character gained with his own party, and still more with posterity, by this unflinching and persevering struggle with the jacobins ; but he was not seconded by men of sufficient vigour, and, wearied at length by an anarchy so opposed to his probity and inflexible love of order, he offered his resignation. The girondists, in reply, proposed that the assembly should invite him to remain in office, while the mountain, of whom Danton was the mouthpiece, complained of his feebleness and of his being governed by his wife. His letter of the 3d of September was cited as sufficient exculpation from the charge of weakness. The assembly, without expressing an opinion, passed to the order of the day. The girondists, and every worthy member, entreated Roland to remain in the ministry ; and he wrote to the assembly — "Since I am calumniated, since I am threatened by dangers, and since the convention appear to desire it, I remain. It is too glorious," he continued, alluding to his wife, "that my alliance with courage and virtue is the only reproach made against me."

These accusations against madame Roland, and the hatred borne her by the mountain, were increased by the influence she continued to exercise. Society, such as the Parisians had once gloried in — assemblies of the wise, the witty, and the fair — were at an end. The drawing-room of madame Roland was the only one in which elegance, and sense, and good breeding reigned. Barbaroux, named, from his beauty, the Antinous of

France, Louvet, Guadet, and others, met there, and added to the elegance of the coteries of past times, the serious and deeper spirit of the present hour. Too soon they were swept away by the torrent of the revolution.

On the 24th of October Roland again came forward with a report on the state of the capital, which was written with dignity, but with a strict adherence to truth: he described with energy, and strongly reprobated, the crimes committed on the 2d September. He cast the accusation of sanguinary outrage on a few; but he blamed the many for their culpable weakness in permitting such crimes. Robespierre rose to answer him; but his known complicity with the Septembrisers excited abhorrence and confusion in the chamber. It was on this occasion when Robespierre, relying on the terror felt by his enemies, defied them to accuse him, that Louvet crossed the chamber to the tribune and exclaimed with energy — "Yes; I accuse you!" The rest of the girondists supported him. The speech that followed this denunciation was full of energy, daring truths, and resolute measures. Had they been followed up on the instant, France had been spared the reign of terror. Robespierre, confused, overwhelmed, ghastly with terror, could only ask a delay to prepare his defence. A disinterested but mistaken love of order and justice caused his adversaries to assent to his request.

Marat had also been attacked by Louvet; Danton was enveloped more remotely in the accusation; and these men, together with Robespierre, saw safety only in the extirpation of the girondists. They spared no pains to calumniate the party, and madame Roland shared in the odium they cast upon her husband. They were accused of forming a society for the purpose of corrupting the public mind, and of conspiring to separate France, founded on the idea already mentioned, of establishing a republic in the south, if the king should subjugate the north. Vague charges were magnified into crimes, and punished by death, when the people were above law, and anarchy prevailed.

Roland continued to struggle with the mountain party which each day gained ascendency. The execution of Louis XVI. showed him that these struggles were vain. He looked on the death of the monarch as a signal for a course of sanguinary measures which he had no power to avert. Roland had hitherto resolved to resist the men who steeped their country in blood and crime; but he was now discouraged, not by the dangers which he felt gather round himself, but by the impossibility of stemming the tide of evil, and he sent in his resignation on the 23d of January. The moderate party in the convention dared not utter a remonstrance, so completely were they under the domination of the mountain. Roland published his accounts, which exonerated him from the calumnies cast upon him, but his enemies refused to sanction them by a report. He made no other effort, but remained in seclusion, seeing only his intimate friends, the girondists, and often discussing with them the possibility of awing the capital through the influence of the southern departments. Meanwhile the advance of the foreign armies plunged the nation in terror, and induced it to place yet more entire confidence in the demagogues who promised victory at the cost of the lives of all the citizens who opposed them. The struggle between the girondists and mountain party thus continued for several months, till the latter completely triumphed, and passed a decree of arrest against twenty-two of the opposite party. Some among them surrendered, to display their obedience to the law. Others fled, for the purpose of exciting the departments to resist the tyrants of the capital. 1793. Ætat. 39.

For some time madame Roland had expected arrest and imprisonment. She had feared the entry of the mob into her house, and had slept with a pistol under her pillow, that, if laid hands on by ruffians, she might deliver herself by death from outrage. Latterly, finding her husband and herself quite powerless for good, she had made preparations for returning to the country,

whither strong personal motives caused her to wish to retire; she was delayed by illness, and before she recovered strength, danger thickened. When the men came, on the 31st of May, to execute the order of arrest on Roland, she resolved to announce this circumstance, and his refusal to obey the order, herself, to the convention. She hurried alone, and veiled, to execute her purpose. Her entrance was opposed by the sentinels — she persisted, and sent in a letter she had prepared, for the president, soliciting to be heard. The disturbance that reigned in the assembly, and want of resolution on the part of her friends who still sat there, prevented its being read. She waited some time; penetrated by indignation, by compassion for her country, while all she loved were exposed to peril, she was far above personal fear; and earnestly desired to be permitted to speak, feeling that she should command attention. Failing in her attempt, she returned home. Roland was absent — he had already taken measures for flight — she sought and found him, related her ill success, and again returned to the assembly. It was now ten at night. When she arrived at the Place du Carrousel, she saw an armed force around; cannon were placed before the gate of the national palace; the assembly itself was no longer sitting.

She returned home. Roland was safe — she resolved to remain and await the event, indifferent to her own fate. Since the resignation of Roland she had lived in great retirement. There is a belief, more a tradition than an asserted fact, that this noble-hearted woman, whose soul was devoted to the fulfilment of her duties, to whom life was matter of indifference compared to her affections and her sense of virtue, had felt for the first time, now in mature life, the agitations and misery of passion. It is supposed that Barbaroux, deputy from the commune of Marseilles, was the object of her attachment,—Barbaroux, who was called Antinöus from his beauty: he was full of courage, ardour, and those republican dreams so dear to madame Roland. In

her portraits of various chiefs of the revolution, she says of him that he was active, laborious, frank, and brave, with all the vivacity of a Marsellais: full of attachment to freedom, and proud of the revolution, he was one of those whom an enlightened party would wish to attach, and who would have enjoyed great reputation in a republic. She adds that when Roland resigned they saw more of him: his open character and ardent patriotism inspired them with confidence. No word she writes shows that he was regarded by her in any light except that of her friend; but, in other portions of her memoirs, she alludes darkly to the struggles of love; and it is evident that her project of retiring into the country originated in her resolution to conquer her own heart. And now this passion was there, with its hopelessness and misery, to elevate her far above fear of prison or death.

Emissaries came to inquire vainly for Roland. Disappointed in their purpose they left a sentinel at her door. She at last retired to rest; but, after an hour's sleep, she was awakened by her servant who announced that the officers of the section demanded to see her. She guessed at once their errand, nor was she deceived. For a moment she deliberated whether she should resist an arrest, which, as being made in the night, was illegal. But she saw that would be useless. Seals were put on her effects: the house was filled by above 100 men. At seven o'clock she left her home, amidst the tears and cries of her child and servants. Outside she was hailed by the sanguinary cries of the mob. "Do you wish the windows to be closed," said one of the men seated beside her in the carriage. "No, gentlemen," she replied; "innocence, however oppressed, will never assume the appearance of guilt. I fear the eyes of no one, and will not hide myself." "You have more firmness than most men," replied her guard.

Shut up in the prison of the abbey, she delayed only till the next day to arrange her room, and make plans for her prison life. She asked for books — Plutarch's

Lives, Thomson's Seasons, in French, and a few English books, were those she chose. She turned her mind from her sorrows, to occupy herself by her mode of life and duties. She resolved to limit her wants to mere necessities. A whim seized her to try on how little she could subsist. She retrenched the number of her meals, and gave up coffee, and chocolate, and wine: the money she saved by these privations she distributed among the poorer prisoners.

At first, at the instigation of friends, she addressed letters to the convention, and to the ministers, appealing against her imprisonment: they met with no notice. She then occupied herself by drawing up notes concerning the revolution, her views and conduct, and the characters of the chiefs — wishing to leave behind a full exculpation of her opinions and actions.

On the 24th of June she was exposed to a most cruel deception. She was told that she was free — she left the abbey — but, on alighting at her home, she was again arrested, and carried to the prison of St. Pelagie. The change was greatly for the worse; the prisoners were of the lowest and most infamous class of both sexes. She roused her courage to meet this fresh indignity, for she felt keenly the insolent play exercised on her feelings. Some hours' reflection restored calm to her firm soul. She resolved again to cheat time and anxiety by occupation. "Had I not my books and leisure?" she writes: "was I no longer myself? I was almost angry at having felt disturbed; and thought only of making use of life, and employing my faculties with that independence which a strong mind preserves even in chains, and which disappoints one's most cruel enemies." "Firmness," she continues, "does not only consist in rising above circumstances by an effort of will, but by maintaining the tone of mind by regulations that govern it." And thus, in the midst of terror and death, she schooled herself to fortitude and peace. She portioned out her days in various studies. She never left her cell, for her immediate neighbours were

women of that class which is lost to decency and shame; she could not shut her ears to the conversation they held from their windows with the men in the opposite cells. After a time this shocking state of things was altered. The wife of the goaler, compassionating her situation, gave her another room above her own; and she was thus delivered from her unhappy neighbours, the sight of turnkeys, and the depressing routine of prison rules. Madame Bouchaud waited on her herself, and surrounded her with all that could soften imprisonment. Jasmine was trailed round the bars of her window; she had a piano in her room, and every comfort that the narrow space would admit. She could almost forget her captivity, and began to indulge hope. Roland was in a place of safety; her daughter under safe guardianship; her fugitive friends were at Caen, assembling partisans, and she fancied that political events were tending towards amelioration. Resigned for the present, she was almost happy. She saw a few friends; Bosc brought her flowers from the Jardin des Plantes; and her occupations filled up the intervals of the day.

Seeing no speedy termination to her imprisonment, it became eligible to choose an occupation that would carry her forward from day to day, imparting interest to their course. She began her own memoirs; at first she almost forgot sorrow as she wrote; but the horrors that were happening, the massacres, guillotinings, and sufferings of her country grew thick and dark around, and often she interrupted herself, in pictures of domestic peace, to lament the fate of lost friends, and the ghastly ruin that overwhelmed all France. Nor could she always keep calm the tenour of her personal cares and feelings. Separated from her child and all she loved best, hearing only of distress and tyranny, she was sometimes overpowered by grief. In spite of the kindness of the gaoler and his wife, she saw and heard too much of vice and misery, such as is ever found within a prison, more especially at a period when so many innocent were

victims, not to be frequently dispirited. The brutality of a prison visitor in authority disturbed the little peace she had acquired. He saw with anger the comforts of her room; and, saying that equality must be maintained, ordered that she should be transferred to a cell. A hard lesson on equality was this to the republican heroine; equality between the guilty and the innocent, which mingled in revolting association the victim of injustice with the votaries of vice.

The reign of terror had begun. A decree was passed to bring the twenty-two accused deputies to trial. Her prison became filled with her friends, and, as one after the other they were led to the guillotine, they were replaced by fresh victims. She made some struggles, by letters to men in power, to be liberated, since, as yet, she was accused of no crime: these failing, she meditated suicide. At the beginning of October she writes, in the journal of her last thoughts, "Two months ago I aspired to the honour of ascending the scaffold. Victims were still allowed to speak, and the energy of great courage might have been of service to truth. Now all is lost: to live is basely to submit to a ferocious rule, and to give it the opportunity of committing fresh atrocities." She bade adieu to her husband, her child, her faithful servant, her friends; to the sun, to the solitary country where she had lived in peace, to hours of meditation and serene thoughts; and she exclaims, "God! supreme being! soul of the world! source of all I feel of great, good, and happy! thou in whose existence I believe, for I must have emanated from something better than what I see, I am about to re-unite myself to thy essence." With these thoughts she wrote directions for the education of her Eudora, and a letter, in which she bids her child "remember her mother."

The act of accusation against the chief girondists, among whom she was included, and her expected examination before the revolutionary tribunal, caused her to dismiss this purpose: she hoped to do some good by

speaking the truth courageously to her assassins. One after the other, her friends underwent the mockery of a trial, while her turn was delayed from day to day. The tenderness, the greatness of her mind displayed itself in the most touching manner during this suspense. She wrote to her friends, but her thoughts chiefly lingered round her child; and again she wrote to the person who had the charge of her in few, and simple, but strong words, conceived in all the energy of maternal love.

On the 31st of October, the day of the execution of her revered friend Brissot, she was transferred to the *conciergerie,* and placed in a squalid cell amidst all the filth of a crowded prison. Her examination took place on the following day, and continued for several days after. Her crime was her intercourse with her friends, the deputies of the gironde, now proscribed. She was scarcely permitted to answer, but her courage enforced attention. She was bid choose an advocate for her trial: she named Marceau, and retired with serene and even cheerful dignity, saying to her accusers, "I wish, in return for all the ill you bring on me, peace equal to that which I preserve, whatever may be the value attached to it."

The following night she occupied herself by writing her defence. It is eloquent and full of feeling, and concludes by a wish that she may be the last victim immolated to party frenzy, and a declaration that she shall joyfully quit an unhappy land drowned in the blood of the just.

This defence was not spoken. After her examination some witnesses were examined; the act of accusation was drawn up, and judgment delivered, which pronounced that "There existed a horrible conspiracy against the unity and indivisibility of the republic, the liberty and safety of the French people; that madame Roland was proved to have been an accomplice in this conspiracy, and was therefore condemned to death; and that the

judgment was to be put in execution within twenty-four hours."

During the few eventful and miserable days which this courageous woman passed in the *conciergerie*, she often forgot herself in endeavours to console her companions in adversity. Riouffe, in his "Mémoires d'un Détenu," who was confined in the same prison, writes, "The blood of the twenty-two victims was yet warm when madame Roland arrived at the *conciergerie*. Perfectly aware of the fate that awaited her, her tranquillity was not disturbed. Though past the bloom of life, she was yet full of attractions: tall, and of an elegant figure, her physiognomy was animated; but sorrow and long imprisonment had left traces of melancholy in her face that tempered her natural vivacity. Something more than is usually found in the eyes of woman beamed in her large dark eyes, full of sweetness and expression. She often spoke to me at the grate with the freedom and courage of a great man. This republican language falling from the lips of a pretty French woman, for whom the scaffold was prepared, was a miracle of the revolution. We gathered attentively round her in a species of admiration and stupor. Her conversation was serious without being cold. She spoke with a purity, a melody, and a measure, which rendered her language a sort of music, of which the ear was never tired. She spoke of the deputies, who had just perished, with respect, but without effeminate pity; reproaching them, even, for not having taken sufficiently strong measures. Sometimes her sex had the mastery, and we perceived that she had wept over the recollection of her daughter and her husband. The woman who waited on her said to me one day — 'Before you she calls up all her courage; but in her room she remains sometimes for hours together leaning against the window, weeping.'"

On the 10th of November she was led to die. She went to the scaffold dressed in white. As she went, she exerted herself to inspire another victim who accom-

panied her, whose fortitude failed him, with resolution similar to her own. Twice, it is said, she won him to smile. Arriving at the place of execution, she bowed before the statue of Liberty, saying, "Oh, Liberty! how many crimes are committed in thy name!" She then bade her companion ascend first, that he might not have the pain of seeing her die. Her turn followed; and to the last she preserved her courage, and her calm and gentle dignity of manner.

She perished at the age of thirty-nine. Her death crowned her life, and has bequeathed her name to an illustrious immortality.

Her husband was in safety at Rouen when he heard of her death. He resolved not to survive her. He consulted with his friends whether he should deliver himself up to the revolutionary tribunal, or destroy himself. The interests of his child made him determine on the latter, as his legalised execution would have caused his fortune to be confiscated. He left the house where he had taken refuge, to prevent the friends who sheltered him from suffering persecution. He stabbed himself with the blade of a sword-stick, on the 15th of November, on a high road near Rouen. In his pocket was found a paper, declaring the cause of his death. "The blood that flows in torrents in my country," he wrote, "dictates my resolve: indignation caused me to quit my retreat. As soon as I heard of the murder of my wife, I determined no longer to remain on an earth tainted by crime."

The grandeur, courage, and sincerity of madame Roland's character fill us with admiration; her sweetness, and tenderness, and virtue add charms to the impression. How easy it is in all that is human to spy defects! Her autobiography is full of traits that betray considerable vanity; and her husband, it is said, would have been spared much ridicule had she not put herself so forward during his ministry. It does not appear, however, that Roland wished to be spared his share of the ridicule which

low-minded men delight in affixing on superior beings of the other sex. We entertain a conviction that, if her husband had wished her to mingle less in his deliberations and labours, she would at once have yielded; but her enthusiasm and her aid was in his eyes the reward of his upright and manly conduct, and he gave token by his death that life was valueless when he was deprived of her sympathy and affection.

MADAME DE STAEL.

1766—1817.

According to the custom of the people of Geneva, which is to throw their children on their own resources very early in life, the parents of Necker sent him to Paris at the age of fifteen, as clerk in the banking-house of Vernet. He quickly displayed talents for business, and, becoming a partner in the house of Thelusson, laid the foundation of his fortune. He quitted the bank, as better speculations opened, when he was named resident for the republic of Geneva at the French court. The duke de Choiseuil liked and advanced him. He named him administrator of the French East Indian company; and at this post, and by speculations in the English funds, he made a large private fortune.

His early years were devoted to these pursuits, and he was so absorbed by them that he enjoyed few of the pleasures of youth. He, meanwhile, acquired both experience and knowledge in finance. Wishing to bring himself into notice, he wrote the "Eloge de Colbert" in 1773, which gained the prize in the French academy. His essay on the corn laws increased his reputation. Maurepas consulted him when alarmed by the disastrous state of the finances; and, by degrees, all eyes turned towards him as the man who alone could save France from bankruptcy, through his knowledge of business, and the great resources which his plans opened in the regulation of the taxation and expenditure of the country. As difficulty, distress, and alarm gathered thick and dark round the government, and the expectation of a war rendered it necessary to supply the requisite ex-

penses, the hopes placed in Necker caused him, in 1777, to be raised to the office of director-general.

Soon after his appointment as minister from the republic of Geneva, he had married mademoiselle Curchod. The name of this lady is familiar to the English reader as being that of the object of the first and only love of the historian Gibbon. On the mother's side she was descended from a high French protestant family of Provence, which had been driven into exile by the edict of Nantes. Her father was a clergyman, and exercised the function of minister in a Swiss village. He had spared no pains in the education of his daughter. She was versed in several dead and living languages; her understanding was sedulously cultivated, and her beauty and amiable disposition combined to render her an extraordinary woman. She was devotedly attached to her husband, and he regarded her with a mixture of admiration, reverence, and love. The object of her life was to make him happy. She gathered the beaux esprits of Paris round their table to divert him after the fatigues of the day. Their house became the resort of the best society. They were considered exemplary and clever, yet dull and pedantic. The talents of Necker, however, were respected; and madame Necker, though she was adorned by none of the light and trifling, yet winning and elegant, manners and conversation of a Parisian lady, yet pleased by her beauty, and a certain ingenuousness and purity of mind, that gave sweetness to her countenance and a native grace to her manners.

This exemplary pair had an only daughter. She was born in Paris on the 22d April, 1766. Her mother was desirous of bestowing on her a perfect education. Madame Necker possessed great firmness of character, and a strong understanding. She submitted every feeling and action of her life to the control of reason. She carried her love of logical inference into the smallest as well as the most important events of life; and fulfilled to the letter every the slightest duty of daily and hourly occurrence. Finding her young daughter apt and willing to

learn, she thought she could not teach her too much, nor store her mind with too many facts and words. This was not done as an English mother would have practised in the seclusion of the schoolroom, but in the midst of society, in which the young lady soon learnt to shine by her eloquent sallies and vivacious spirits. We have a sketch of what mademoiselle Necker was at eleven years of age, which presents a singular picture of the diversity of the objects and modes of education on the continent from our quiet and reserved notions of what is becoming in childhood. Madame Necker was desirous of establishing a friendship between her daughter and a mademoiselle Huber, the child of an old friend of the family. The young people were introduced to each other, and mademoiselle Necker showed transports of delight at the idea of having a companion, and promised her, on the instant, to love her for ever. "She spoke," mademoiselle Huber writes, "with a warmth and facility which were already eloquence, and which made a great impression on me. We did not play like children. She immediately asked me what my lessons were, if I knew any foreign languages, and if I went often to the play. When I said I had only been three or four times, she exclaimed, and promised that we should often go together, and when we came home write down an account of the piece. It was her habit, she said; and, in short, we were to write to each other every day.

"We entered the drawing-room. Near the arm-chair of madame Necker was the stool of her daughter, who was obliged to sit very upright. As soon as she had taken her accustomed place, three or four old gentlemen came up and spoke to her with the utmost kindness. One of them, in a little round wig, took her hands in his, held them a long time, and entered into conversation with her as if she had been twenty. This was the abbé Raynal; the others were Messrs. Thomas, Marmontel, the marquis de Pesay, and the baron de Grimm. We sat down to table. It was a picture to see how mademoiselle Necker listened. She did not speak herself;

but so animated was her face that she appeared to converse with all. Her eyes followed the looks and movements of those who talked: it seemed as if she guessed their ideas before they were expressed. She entered into every subject; even politics, which at this epoch was one of the most engrossing topics of conversation. After dinner, a good deal of company arrived. Each guest, as he approached madame Necker, addressed her daughter with some compliment or pleasantry: she replied to all with ese and grace. They delighted to attack and embarrass her, and to excite her childish imagination, which was already brilliant. The cleverest men were those who took greatest pleasure in making her talk. They asked her what she was reading, recommended new books, and gave her a taste for study by conversing concerning what she knew, or on what she was ignorant."

Thus this extraordinary woman imbibed, as it were with her mother's milk, a taste for society and display. She learnt to take intense pleasure in the communication of ideas with intelligent men, and in sharing in the sparkling wit that gathered round her. She enjoyed the excitement of spirits that results from the sense of expressing her thoughts, and at the same time having the sphere enlarged by the instant interchange with others. The sensations of success in society, of praise and reputation, were familiar to her in childhood, and no wonder they became as necessary as her daily bread in after years.

It was her mother's plan to tax her intellects to their height. She was incited to study diligently, to listen to conversation on subjects beyond her years, to frequent the theatre; her pleasures and occupations alike were so many exertions of mind. She wrote a great deal. Her writings were read in society, and applauded. The praises she received developed also the feelings of her heart. She passionately loved her parents and her friends; she read with an enthusiasm and interest that made books a portion of her existence. She was accustomed to say, that the fate of Clarissa Harlowe was

one of the events of her youth. Susceptible of impression, serious in the midst of her vivacity, she rather loved what made her weep rather than laugh.

The species of perpetual excitement in which she lived, and the excessive application and attention required of her by her mother, had at length a bad effect on her health. At the age of fourteen it became apparent that she was declining. The advice of Tronchin was asked; he was alarmed by the symptoms, and ordered her to be removed into the country, to spend her life in the open air, and to abandon all serious study. Madame Necker was deeply mortified. She saw all the materials for a prodigy of learning and knowledge in her daughter, and was almost angry that her frame was injured by the work she required from her to bring her to the perfection she meditated. Unable to continue to its height her system of education, she abandoned it altogether. Henceforth no longer looking on her as her own work, she ceased to take interest in her talents, which she regarded as superficial and slight; when she heard her praised, she replied, "Oh! it is nothing, absolutely nothing, in comparison to what I intended to make her."

The young lady meanwhile enjoyed the leisure she obtained: no longer called upon to store her mind with words and facts, she gave herself up to her imagination. She and her friend passed the summer at St. Ouen, a country-house of Necker, two leagues from Paris; they dressed themselves like muses; they composed poetry, and declaimed it; they wrote and acted plays. Giving the rein to her fancy, and impelled by natural vivacity, she became poetess, tragedian, actress, thus, almost in childhood. The carelessness that her mother showed, after her disappointment with regard to her education, had the effect of developing in the young girl the chief passion of her heart — filial affection towards her father: she had now leisure to seek his society; and his great goodness, his admiration of herself, and the perfect friendship and openness of commu-

nication that subsisted between them, gave rise to the passionate attachment towards him which she dwells upon in her writings with so much fervour. She seized every opportunity of enjoying his society; and he perceived and delighted in her talents, which displayed themselves with peculiar advantage when with him. She saw that, overwhelmed as he was by public cares and engrossing business, he needed to be amused in his moments of leisure. He adored his wife, but no one was ever less amusing; his daughter, on the other hand, exerted herself to divert him: she tried a thousand ways and risked any sally or pleasantry so to win him to smile, and smiles quickly came at her bidding. He was not prodigal of his approbation; his eyes were more flattering than his words; and he believed it to be more necessary and even more amusing to rally her for her defects, than to praise her for her excellences. She saw that his gay reproofs were just, and modelled herself by them. She often said to her friends, "I owe to the inconceivable penetration of my father the frankness of my character and the sincerity of my mind: he unmasked every affectation or pretension, and when near him I got into the habit of thinking that every feeling of my heart could be read." Madame Necker grew a little jealous of the superior power her daughter possessed of amusing her husband; besides, although she had ardently wished her to shine in society, yet she had desired her to be remarkable for her attainments and knowledge, not for her wit and imagination. She looked coldly therefore on the admiration she excited, and even protested against it. The young girl turned from her chilling and prim rebuffs to the encouragement she found in her father's sympathy and gladdening smiles. In the drawing-room she escaped from the side of Madame Necker, who regarded the mistakes which her giddiness and vivacity caused her to make with severe and correcting eyes. She listened with respect when reproved, but gladly sheltered herself behind her father's chair; at first silently, then throwing

in a word, till at last, one after the other, the cleverest men in the room gathered round to listen to her sallies and to be charmed by her eloquence.

The position that her parents held was exceedingly calculated to enchain the affections and raise the enthusiasm of the ardent girl. Her father was looked up to as the man whose exertions and talents were saving France. When named director-general of finances, he had refused the salary appended to the situation, that he might feel more free to diminish that of others, and benefit France by his economy with a clearer reputation. Her mother used his power for the most admirable purposes. She ameliorated the condition of the hospitals in the capital; and established near Paris, at her own expense, a charitable institution, so well directed that it became the model of every other. The young are apt to think their parents superior to the rest of the world. The claims which M. and Madame Necker possessed to real superiority, from their virtues and talents, naturally added to the warmth of their daughter's affection. The distinction in which they were held made the path of her life bright; and even the first check that occurred in her father's career tended to excite still more her admiration for him, as opposition gives form and strength to every power exerted to overcome it. Necker was too conscientious and too firm in his schemes of reform not to have enemies: he was too vain also not to desire to have his plans universally known and approved. Publicity is indeed the proper aim of every honest public man; but it was in utter variance with the policy of the old French government. For the pur- 1781.
pose of making his system known to the nation, Necker Ætat.
published his "Compte Rendu," which was a statement 15.
of the past and present condition of the finances, addressed to the king. It occasioned a great clamour. His daughter read his pamphlet, and heard the discussions concerning it. She addressed an anonymous letter to her father on the subject: he recognised the style; and his affection was increased by this testimony

of her talents and filial affection. The "Compte Rendu," however, increased the number and importance of his enemies; the impropriety of the act was urged upon the king: Maurepas had already become hostile to him. Necker was attacked and calumniated. He, and his wife still more, were very susceptible to public blame: they wished to silence the libellers, who grew the more bitter and active the more they perceived that their stings were felt. Necker then demanded a sign of favour from the king, necessary, he thought, for the support of his influence: he asked for the *entrée au conseil* (a seat in the cabinet), which was refused on the score of his being a protestant. On this he committed an act which he ever after regretted, an act that showed that he preferred his own private feelings to the good of the country which he had promised to save,—he resigned his office.

His daughter gathered pleasure rather than mortification from his resignation. It was acknowledged that by so doing he had plunged the royal family in distress. He had repaired, on the first moment of his returning to a private station, to St. Ouen: all France, as she calls it—that is, all the nobility and all the best society of the capital, the magistrates, the clergy, the merchants and men of letters — came to see him, to express their regrets, their fears for France, their hopes that he would return to office. She heard that Paris was in commotion. At the theatre, every verse in the play of the night ("Henri IV." was acted, and the mention of Sully afforded wide scope) that could be converted into an allusion to the favourite minister was applauded with acclamations; the public walks, the *cafés*, every public place, were filled by an eager yet silent crowd. Consternation was painted on every face — ruin was anticipated for the country which Necker had abandoned. From St. Ouen the ex-minister proceeded to Switzerland. He bought the mansion and estate of Coppet; on the lake of Geneva, and varied his residence between that place and visits to Paris. He was addressed by various sovereigns — Catherine II.,

Joseph, emperor of Austria, and the king of Naples, to undertake their affairs as minister of finance; but he preferred literary leisure and domestic peace, with a wife whom he adored, and a daughter who was becoming each day dearer and more interesting.

In the retreat at Coppet he published a work on finance, of which 80,000 copies were sold in one day. Mdlle. Necker shared the triumph; she was his companion, his friend. On her part she was not idle; and, even at an early age, began the career of authorship in which in after life she became so distinguished. It was the custom in French society to meet to hear an author read his productions. In this country, such a style of amusement would be considered very dull and tiresome; but it was otherwise in Paris. The audience was easily pleased. The women wept at the right moment—the men were ready to start from their chairs: enthusiasm became contagious. If the subject were pathetic, the room resounded with sobs and suppressed cries; if comic, with bursts of laughter. Mediocre authors reaped easy but animating success; and many works, like the "Saisons" of St. Lambert, were vaunted to the skies by listening friends, which were acknowledged to be poor and wearisome when published. In the same way, the plays and tales of Mdlle. Necker were read by her in numerous companies. These productions were afterwards printed, and possess slight merit. The plays are flat, and what in common parlance is called maudlin; the tales inflated, and without originality: when read in society, they were applauded with transport. It cannot be doubted that this sort of encouragement must rouse to its height the power of an author of real genius. In this country, writers receive little praise except that which results from the number of copies that are sold; and must rely entirely on the spirit of inspiration to carry them through the toils of authorship. How seldom, how very seldom, does an English author hear one word of real sympathy or admiration! Over reserve, over fear of compro-

mising our opinions, and being laughed at for being in the wrong, holds us in. Madame de Staël, animated by the fervour of her French friends, believed in her own genius, even before it was developed; and self-confidence gave it a strength of wing that enabled her to soar to the extreme height that her abilities permitted.

The were stirring days in which she lived. Calonne succeeded to Necker as minister, and, having thrown every thing into confusion, was obliged to yield his place; he was succeeded by Fouquereux and Villedeuil, men of nothing, who abandoned the state of finances as hopeless. Lomenie de Brienne, archbishop of Toulouse, replaced them; and he caused the king to engage to assemble the states-general, and plunged the finances in a worse state than ever. Necker looked on with anxiety, partly for France, and partly for himself; for he felt sure that he would be summoned to save the country at the last gasp, and trembled to lose his reputation if called in too late. "Why have they not given me the archbishop's fifteen months?" he exclaimed, when at the end of that time he was called in to repair Brienne's faults. Calonne had attacked his "Compte Rendu." He wrote a memoir, addressed and sent to the king, to defend himself, which the king requested him not to publish. But Necker laid great store by the public voice, and did not hesitate to act in opposition to the king's wish, and, in consequence, was exiled by a *lettre de cachet* to forty leagues from Paris; but four months after he was recalled and named minister.

1788. Ætat. 22. We dwell upon these circumstances of Necker's life, as they were the events that chiefly interested his daughter. She had been struck with dismay at the moment of his exile. She was married at this time; but it is a singular circumstance that in her life her marriage is a very secondary event, and her husband's name seldom mentioned. As the only daughter of a millionaire, Mdlle. Necker's hand had been asked by many French nobles; but it was determined not to marry her to a Catholic, at the same time that she and

her parents were anxious to make a marriage that should enable her to reside in France, and to appear at court. It is told of the childhood of madame de Staël, that, at the age of eleven, she offered to marry Gibbon. He being a favourite friend of her parents, she hoped to please them by giving them a son-in-law of whom they were fond, with little regard to his strange repulsive figure and ugly face. And now she thought of station and convenience, and not at all of finding a friend or companion — far less a lover — in her husband. The baron de Staël Holstein, chamberlain to the queen of Sweden, had resided in Paris for some years, first as counsellor to the Swedish embassy, and afterwards as ambassador. He frequented the society of the French liberals, was a friend of Necker, and entered the lists of his daughter's admirers. He was a protestant and a noble, and he was also an amiable honourable man. The only objection to the union was the likelihood of his being recalled to his own country. The king of Sweden, Gustavus III., with whom he was a favourite, favoured the match, and promised that he should continue for several years to be ambassador at the French court. In addition, M. de Staël promised never to take her to Sweden without her own consent. On these considerations the marriage took place in the year 1786, when she was just twenty. Madame de Staël appeared at court. It is related that, desirous as she had been of acquiring this privilege, yet Parisian society was ill-naturedly amused by the numerous mistakes in etiquette which the young ambassadress had made on her presentation. She gaily related them herself, so to disarm her enemies. At this time, also, she appeared as an authoress in print, publishing her letters on the writings of Rousseau. We find in this work all the traits that distinguished madame de Staël's writings to the end, — great enthusiasm and eloquence, a pleasure in divining the mysteries of existence, and dwelling on the melancholy that attends it, — considerable power of expressing her thoughts, and much beauty and delicacy in the thoughts themselves, but an absence

of strength and of the highest elevation both of talent and moral feeling.

We have a "portrait" of madame de Staël at this epoch, such as it was the fashion for friends to write of friends in Paris at that time. It is a favourable description, yet marked by distinctive features and characteristic touches. "Zulma advances; her large dark eyes sparkle with genius; her hair, black as ebony, falls on her shoulders in waving ringlets; her features are more marked than delicate, yet they express something superior to the destiny of her sex. There she is! every one cried, when she appeared, and all became breathless. When she sang, she extemporised the words of her song; the celestial brightness of composition animated her face, and held the audience in serious attention; at once astonished and delighted, we knew not which most to admire, her facility or perfection. When her music ceased, she talked of the great truths of nature, the immortality of the soul,—love of liberty—of the fascination and the danger of the passions; her features meanwhile have an expression superior to beauty, her physiognomy is full of play and variety, the accents of her voice have a thousand modulations, and there is perfect harmony between her thoughts and their expression. Without hearing her words, the inflections of her tones, her gestures, her look, cause her meaning to be understood. When she ceased, a murmur of approbation ran round the room; she looked down modestly, her long eyelashes covered her flashing eyes, and the sun was clouded over." There were many people in Paris, who, of course, were willing to turn the pretensions of the young and brilliant improvisatrice into ridicule; but though her want of beauty, her heedlessness, which often led her into mistakes, her vivacity, which overstept the mark of feminine grace, opened a field for sarcasm, no one could listen to her in public without admiration, no one could associate with her in private without love. She stept, as on to a stage, in the first brilliancy of youth, to be admired and to enjoy; but

public events were swelling and disturbing the stream of time, and it became a tempestuous flood, that wrecked her dearest hopes, and consigned her at last to that domestic retirement and peace, for which her outset in life had not formed her, and which, instead of being a haven of rest and enjoyment, was as a dead sea on which she weltered in misery and despair.

Necker was restored to the ministry in August, 1788; public credit revived under favour of his name, and famine and alarm were exchanged for plenty and security. He found the king pledged to assemble the states-general, and he did not hesitate in advising him to redeem his word; yet he met the questions and difficulties that arose with regard to the details of the measure with an irresolution that showed that, however clever he might be in matters of finance, he was ill fitted for weightier questions of general politics.

The convocation of the states excited the national enthusiasm to its height; and Necker, giving the weight of his influence to the liberal party, augmented his own popularity. He admired greatly the English constitution, and wished it to be imitated in France. Madame de Staël coincided in his views, and viewed the assemblage of the different orders with sentiments resembling rapture. According to her views, the horrors of approaching famine and the perils of bankruptcy were to be averted by this measure, and the future welfare of France, individual liberty, and national prosperity, were to be placed on durable foundations. The first struggles of the *tiers état* with the king and privileged orders excited her sympathy. Yet her father wished to act a moderate part, while even his moderation seemed treason to the blinded royalists. He thus incurred the distrust of both parties. Though minister, he was not permitted to direct the counsels of the king; and, at the same time, by only partially upholding the pretensions of the commons, he began to excite the mixed contempt and aversion of the more democratic leaders. During the struggle of the *tiers*

état to obtain a voice in the direction of affairs, he advised the king to meet their demands half way; but the court resolved to crush them altogether, and so fell itself into the pit. Necker saw with terror the purpose of the king in collecting troops round the capital to overawe both the Parisians and the deputies, and his remonstrances showed that he would be no party in the scenes of massacre that must ensue. He offered several times to resign; but the court party felt that it risked too much in the odium which his dismissal would excite. Driven on, however, by evil counsellors, who saw no good to arise in the constitutional liberty of their country, and weighed the blood of their countrymen as nothing in the opposite scale to their power and privileges, the king assembled troops, and the moment drew near when the people and their representatives were to feel the power of the bayonet, and to be reduced to obedience under the bolts of the artillery. The temporising spirit of Necker was more hated by the royal than the popular party, since the former saw injury, and the latter benefit, in any the least infraction of the old state of things. But the king well knew that Necker would never consent to the measures which he had in view, and that, before the military were called on to destroy his subjects, it was necessary to remove a minister round whom the popular party would rally with confidence. Necker continued to attend the king each day, but no affair of importance was discussed before him. This silence filled him with disquiet; he expected to be arrested, and communicated his suspicion to his wife and daughter. Madame de Staël wished him to go a step further in enouncing his opinions, and so to confirm the popular favour; but Necker considered his obligations as servant to the king as paramount. On the 11th of July, as he was about to sit down to dinner, he received a letter from Louis XVI., ordering him to send in his resignation, and to quit France without exciting observation. *Sans bruit* were the words that signified the fears of the

court that his dismissal should become the signal of popular commotion. Necker obeyed to the letter and the spirit of the command. No one person was informed. He and his wife stept into the carriage prepared for their usual evening airing, and, without change of dress or attendant, travelled day and night till they reached Brussels. On the morning of the 12th of July madame de Staël received a letter from her father, announcing his departure, and bidding her retire into the country, lest the Parisians, for his sake, should pay her public homage. She obeyed, and, a new courier having brought her intelligence of his route, she set out on the 15th July to join him. "When I reached them," madame de Staël writes, "three days after, they still wore the full dress which they had on when, after a large dinner party, and while no one suspected the agitating position in which they were placed, they silently quitted France, their friends, their home, and the power which they enjoyed. This dress, covered with dust, the name assumed by my father for the sake of avoiding recognition in France, and so detention through the favour in which he was still held,—all these circumstances filled me with feelings of reverence that caused me to throw myself at his feet as I entered the room of the inn where I found him." Necker had chosen Brussels as his way to Switzerland, as not being the direct road, and so less likely to betray him to the population. To this mark of obedience to the king, he added a testimony of love for France, which, in the days of mammon, was an act of heroism in a moneyed man. Necker had borrowed two millions of livres for the royal treasury, for the purpose of purchasing corn for starving Paris. He had secured this loan on his private fortune. The transaction was not completed when he was dismissed; and he feared that the news of his exile would retard the supply. He wrote, therefore, to confirm his guarantee. These circumstances find place in the biography of madame de Staël, because, the ruling passion of her heart being

love and veneration of her father, we mark the acts that naturally, by their virtue, excited to their height her filial feelings.

True to his resolve of avoiding his partizans in France, Necker proceeded to Basle through Germany. He was accompanied by M. de Staël. His wife and daughter followed more slowly by a different route. At Frankfort, the latter were overtaken by the king's courier that recalled Necker for the third time to the ministry. The commotions in Paris, the destruction of the Bastile, frightened the court into submission to the people. The recall of Necker was a necessary mark of acquiescence in the wishes of the nation. At Basle the family met together, and Necker resolved to return. He was not dazzled by his triumph; he felt the perils he was about to encounter. He wished to serve France as a constitutional minister, but he apprehended a further system of innovation; and he felt he should lose the favour of the people by opposing it, as he had lost the king's by refusing to support his arbitrary measures. He felt, as Burke afterwards expressed it, that he was recalled, like Pompey, for his misfortune; and, like Marius, that he sat among ruins; but he thought that his return at the present crisis would be serviceable to the sovereign and his adherents, and he resolved on it at once. "What a moment of happiness, notwithstanding," Madame de Stael writes, "was our journey from Basle to Paris, when my father decided to return! I do not think that the like ever occurred to any man who was not sovereign of the country. The French nation, ever so animated in the demonstration of its sentiments, gave itself up, for the first time, to hopes, the boundaries of which experience had not yet taught them. Liberty was then only known to the enlightened classes by the noble emotions with which it was associated; and, to the people, by ideas analogous to their necessities and sufferings. Necker appeared as the precursor of the expected good. The liveliest acclamations accompanied every step: the women threw themselves on their knees

afar off in the fields when they saw his carriage pass: the first citizens of the different places we traversed acted as postilions; and in the towns the inhabitants took off the horses to drag the carriage themselves. It was I that enjoyed for him — I was carried away by delight, and must not feel ungrateful for those happy days, however sad were the ones that followed." Various circumstances occurred to display to the returning exiles the overthrow of the royalists and the triumph of the people. Madame de Polignac had already arrived at Basle, on her way to emigration. At ten leagues from Paris, they heard of the arrest of the baron de Besenval, who was being led back prisoner to the capital, where he would infallibly have been massacred in the streets. Necker interfered to keep him where he was till further orders. He, as his first act, went to Paris, to the Hôtel de Ville, to obtain the pardon of M. de Besenval, and a universal amnesty. He was followed and welcomed by joyful acclamations; delight at his restoration to power calmed, for the moment, all party spirit, all political hatred; the assembled people granted all he asked with transport. Madame de Staël and her mother accompanied him. "Oh! nothing," she writes, "can equal the emotion that a woman feels when she has the happiness of hearing the name of one beloved repeated by a whole people. All those faces, which appear for the time animated by the same sentiment as one's self; those innumerable voices, which echo to the heart the name that rises in the air, and which appears to return from heaven after having received the homage of earth; the inconceivable electricity which men communicate to each other when they share the same emotions; all those mysteries of nature and social feeling are added to the greatest mystery of all — love—filial or maternal, but still love; and the soul sinks under emotions stronger than itself. When I came to myself, I felt that I had reached the extreme boundary of happiness."

She had reached it, and the recoil soon came. The popular party, each hour rising in power, disdained the

half measures and weak concessions of the minister :— from that hour, in spite of his feeble, though virtuous, endeavours to restrain popular violence, and, at the same time, to supply the wants of the people, and mitigate their sufferings by great and unwearied exertions and personal sacrifices, the popularity of Necker declined. His propositions were weak and inconsistent ; the king had no confidence in him ; the people withdrew their favour. His daughter could not perceive that his want of energy, and total incapacity to cope with the necessities of the times, were the occasion of this change ; she saw only ingratitude, perversity, and ignorance. Her father still continued, in her eyes, the first of men ; when he triumphed he was a hero, when he fell he was a martyr.

Madame de Staël witnessed nearly all the more deplorable events of the revolution. On the 5th October, when she heard of the march of the people to Versailles to bring the king and queen to Paris, she hastened to join her parents, who were in attendance at court. When she arrived, Necker hastened to the castle to join the council, and madame Necker and her daughter repaired to the hall preceding the one where the king remained, that they might share Necker's fate. The tumult, the inquietude, the various projects, and the trembling expectation of the hour agitated all, and augmented as night approached. A noble arrived from Paris with the latest news. He appeared in the royal presence in a common dress. It was the first time that any man had entered the king's apartment, except in court dress. His recital of the furious armed multitude, which was gathering and approaching, increased the general terror. On the morrow the storm burst. Murder assailed the gates of the palace, and the royal personages, for the first time, were attacked by those outrages, at once sanguinary and insulting, which, thus beginning, never stayed till their destruction was accomplished.

Madame de Staël was present during the whole scene. She stood near when the crowd forced the queen to appear before them, and when at their demand the royal family were carried to Paris. Such scenes could

never be forgotten. When the king and queen set off to the capital, the family of Necker repaired by another route. "We crossed," madame de Staël writes, "the Bois de Boulogne; the weather was beautiful, the breeze scarcely stirred the trees, and the sun was bright enough to dispel all gloom from the scenery. No exterior object replied to our sadness." When they arrived at the Tuileries, the Parisian palace of the kings of France, which had not been inhabited for many years, they found that the beds of the royal children were put up in the room where the queen received them; Marie Antoinette apologised. "You know," she said, "that I did not expect to come here." Her beautiful face expressed anger as she spoke; and madame de Staël must have felt that her father, as popular minister, and herself, as a lover of liberty, were included in the sentiments of resentment which filled the queen's heart.

The resignation and departure of Necker, some months after, was a circumstance full of mortification for his daughter. He traversed the France which had hailed him with such transport on his return from Basle, and found himself surrounded by enemies. Execrations followed his steps, and he was arrested at Arcis-sur-Aube, and obliged to wait for a decree of the national assembly before he was suffered to proceed; his name was held in detestation—his acts reviled. He did not deserve this; for, though weak as a politician, his acts were those of an honourable and generous man. The immediate cause of his resignation of office was the issue of the assignats, which he looked on as the ruin of the public credit; yet he left 2,000,000 of francs, the half of his fortune, in the funds, to run a risk of loss, which he himself deemed, as indeed it proved, inevitable. He retired to Coppet, while his daughter was detained in Paris by illness. She continued to remain there, and, according to French manners, mingled deeply in various political intrigues. Her friend M. de Narbonne was named minister of war, and many of his projects were discussed in her drawing-room. She shared in the project set afoot by La-

1790. Sept. 8.

1791. Æ at. 25.

fayette, of facilitating the escape of the king to the army at Metz. Narbonne, at the head of the royal guard, and several thousand national guards belonging to the department of Jura, were to carry off Louis by force from the Tuileries. Talleyrand was informed of the plan, and approved, but the king rejected it; he was averse to any project that needed the co-operation of Lafayette, whom he hated. Soon after Narbonne was dismissed, and the nomination of Dumouriez and Roland placed the power in the hands of the girondists.

1792. Ætat. 26. Madame de Staël was in Paris during the fatal August that decided the fate of the French monarchy. On the 9th of that month she stood at her window with some friends, and heard the forty-eight tocsins of Paris sound the alarm, which continued all night their monotonous, frequent, and lugubrious tolling. The volunteer patrole sent her intelligence of all that passed, but no one knew what the morrow would bring forth. The attack on the Tuileries began early in the morning; madame de Staël was told that three of her friends, who guarded the outside of the palace, had been seized and massacred. She instantly, with all the intrepidity of a French woman, hurried out to learn the truth. Her carriage was stopped on the bridge. She was told that the work of slaughter was going on on the other side. Still she persisted, and, after a delay of two hours, crossed the bridge, and learnt that her friends were alive, and hiding from the enraged multitude. In the evening she went to see them in the obscure houses in which they had taken refuge; drunken men were lying about on the steps of doors, who roused themselves only to vociferate oaths and execrations. Many women were in the same state; their howlings were still more frightful. She fled when the patrole approached; for they maintained order by protecting the assassins, and assisting them in the work of murder. The interval between the 10th of August and the 2d of September was one of horror; arrests were frequent, and it became known that the massacre of the prisoners was meditated. The outlawed friends of madame de Staël went from house

to house as danger menaced; she received two in her own, hoping that, though her husband was absent, the name she bore, of Swedish ambassadress, would protect her from a domiciliary visit. She was mistaken; the commissioners of police, men named from among the lowest class, accompanied by the soldiery, who guarded the outlets of the house to prevent escape, demanded to search. She resolved to dispute their right, as the only means of saving her friends. She talked to the men; told them that the laws of nations declared an ambassador's house inviolable, and assured them that Sweden was a country on the frontiers of France, and that it would declare war at once if its ambassadress were insulted. She perceived that her arguments made some impression; and, while her heart sank within her, she roused herself to joke them on the folly of their suspicions, and dismissed them with every appearance of politeness and gaiety.

She had already prepared to leave France, and obtained passports. She delayed a few days, anxious to be re-assured with regard to her friends, before she placed herself in safety. During this interval she exerted herself to save M. de Lally-Tollendal, and succeeded, by applying to Manuel, a member of the commune of Paris: he who published Mirabeau's letters, written in the prison of Vincennes, and who, six months afterwards, during the reign of terror, died on the scaffold. On the 2d of September, when the news of the taking of Longwy and Verdun had roused the ferocity of the Parisians to the utmost, and those massacres of helpless prisoners began which remain a perpetual sanguinary stain on the French character, she prepared to set out. Her passports were all regular; and, fancying that the title of wife of a foreign ambassador would be her safeguard, she set out in her carriage, drawn by six horses, and her servants in full livery. Her calculations failed; scarcely had her carriage advanced a few steps when it was surrounded by a crowd of furious women, who seized the horses, and, with ferocious cries, ordered the postilions to drive to

the assembly of the section of St. Germain, to which she belonged. She entered the chamber of the assembly, which was in full deliberation, and by it she was ordered to proceed to the Hôtel de Ville. To reach this latter place she was obliged to traverse Paris; and on the steps of the Hôtel de Ville several men had been assassinated on the 10th of August. She trembled to obey, and yet had no resource. She was three hours on her way, as she was slowly drawn through a crowd who threatened death with hideous shouts and unremitting cries. She addressed several gendarmes who passed near, asking protection; they replied by disdainful and menacing gestures. At length, one gendarme, who had been put in the carriage with her, was touched by her situation (she was with child), and promised to defend her at the peril of his life. She alighted from the carriage at the Hôtel de Ville, in the midst of an armed multitude, and advanced under an avenue of pikes. As she went up the steps a man pointed one against her; the gendarme protected her with his sabre, and she reached the chamber of the commune, where Robespierre presided. Collet d'Herbois and Billaud Varennes acted as his secretaries. The hall was full of people — men, women, and children, shouting *Vive la nation!* She was taken to the raised platform where the president sat, and told to sit down. While she was representing her right, as ambassadress from Sweden, to depart, Manuel, whom she had persuaded to liberate Lally-Tollendal, entered: he was astonished to see her in such a miserable position, and, answering for her, withdrew her from the dreadful hall, and shut her up in his cabinet with her maid. They remained for six hours, oppressed by hunger, thirst, and terror. The windows of the room looked on the Place de Grève, and assassins passed from the prisons, their arms bare and covered with blood, uttering horrible shouts. Her carriage remained in the square. The crowd wished to pillage it: it was defended by Santerre. He respected the daughter of Necker, whose exertions to victual Paris during the scarcity he had

witnessed; and besides he made this task his pretext for not doing his duty in protecting the prisoners. He boasted to Madame de Staël of the service he rendered her; but she could not help reminding him of the manner in which he ought to have been employed. Manuel exclaimed, as he entered, "Ah! how glad I am I set your two friends at liberty yesterday!" When night came on he conveyed her home in his carriage. The lamps were not lighted in the streets, but men passed with torches, whose flare occasioned more terror than darkness itself. The following day she was allowed to depart with her maid only, and a gendarme to conduct her as far as the frontier, so to make sure that she should take with her none of the unfortunate outlaws doomed to death. Tallien conducted her to the barrier. After some difficulties it was passed. "Leaving the capital," she writes, "the tempestuous waves grew calmer, and the mountains of Jura gave no token of the frightful tumults of which Paris was the theatre." And there she found calm refuge beneath her father's roof. Such were the scenes that awaited the early womanhood of madame de Staël:—the sight of every cruel and horrible passion in action in others,—pity, fear, and generous self-devotion excited to their height in her own heart,—harrowing grief, when those whom she loved were butchered,—throbs of transport, when she felt that she had secured their safety. Had she been of a concentrated disposition, such scenes and emotions must have given sublimity to her character. As it was, it confirmed the active generosity and warm benevolence of her disposition; it gave animation to her expression of every sad and heart-moving feeling; while to her credit it must be said, that, even in the midst of such iniquitous and cruel scenes, she gathered no misanthropy, no gall, no hatred, and no revenge.

She paid at this period a short visit to England, and then returning to Geneva, found personal safety and peace with her parents at Coppet; but the political events passing in France, and the horrors of the reign of terror, spread darkness and dismay even to Switzerland. Her father

published a pamphlet, the object of which was to save Louis XVI.; and she wrote an eloquent appeal in favour of Marie Antoinette. Soon even the impression made by the fate of these illustrious victims was almost lost in that of the death of added thousands immolated by Robespierre. Madame de Staël by turns feared for the lives and deplored the death of beloved friends, who day after day died under the axe of the guillotine. She concealed in her house many of the friends of liberty outlawed by the revolutionary tribunal. They assumed Swedish names, under the sanction of M. de Staël. Scaffolds were erected for them on the frontier by their countrymen, as enemies of freedom; foreign nations held them in detestation, as accomplices of the butchers of Paris; but Necker and his daughter, with sounder views and more humane hearts, befriended and saved virtue, whatever might be the opinions which it assumed as the guise in which to manifest its spirit to the world. "One of the reflections that struck us most," madame de Staël writes, "in our long walks on the shores of the lake of Geneva, was the contrast of the beautiful nature by which we were surrounded with the desolation of mankind." In these walks she conversed with her father: his benevolence; the pain he expressed at the idea of being hated by the French, to serve whom he had sacrificed so much; the interchange of intimate and virtuous thought, filled her heart with still more ardent affection towards him, and made him, in her eyes, the greatest as well as the best of men. It was at this time of comparative retirement that she wrote "Reflections on the Peace," which Fox quoted as full of sound political views and just argument.

1794. Ætat. 28.

This period was checkered by the illness, and finally the death, of madame Necker. She died of a lingering nervous disorder. Her husband was unwearied in his attentions and watchful tenderness, and madame de Staël shared his fatigues, and sympathised with and consoled him in his grief. The warmer kindness testified by her father caused her to prefer him; and ma-

dame Necker herself, looking on her daughter as a rival in her husband's affections, had repelled her. But death obliterated these passions, and madame de Staël acknowledged her mother's talents and virtues; she lamented her death, and respected her memory.

It might be thought that madame de Staël, escaped from the sanguinary scenes of the reign of terror, would have been averse to returning to that Paris which had been the theatre of such harrowing tragedies. Far from it. Accustomed to the society of the French, the pedantic, precise, and presumptuous tone of the Genevese was particularly disagreeable to her. While considering herself a French woman, she was eager to mix in the busy scenes that followed the death of Robespierre — to be of use to her friends, and even to influence the choice of a system of government which was to be established in France. She had some remorse in quitting her father; but he encouraged her to go. He felt for her struggle between her dislike to leaving him and her tastes, her friends, her hopes of glory, which called her to France; and, with the truest feelings of sympathy, persuaded her to seek her own happiness, promising to find his in her letters from the scene of action.

M. de Staël being sent by the king of Sweden as minister to Paris, she repaired thither. Her arrival formed an epoch in society. She threw open her drawing-rooms, and all foreigners of distinction, ambassadors, and literary men were charmed to meet in them. It attracted universal attention, and became the signal of the revival of refinement in the capital. Her chief exertions tended to getting the names of various friends erased from the list of emigrants, which, while party spirit ran so high, and the name of monarch and Bourbon was still held in detestation and terror, was matter at once of difficulty and odium. Legendre, a man who had figured during the reign of terror, denounced her in the tribune of the convention, while the newspapers complained of the influence exercised

1795. Ætat. 29.

by women in their *salons dorés*, as they were vulgarly called, and by the society that gathered there. She succeeded in benefiting several of her friends, and this happiness counterbalanced the attacks made against her.

1797. Ætat. 31. During the whole of the reign of the directory, the influence of madame de Staël was great. The expectation of a civil war became more imminent as the royalists rested their hopes on the armies of la Vendée, and the victories of the republican troops on the eastern frontiers, supporting the new state of things, gave energy to the men in power. Moderate and enlightened lovers of freedom desired to reconcile the two parties, and prevent a struggle. Madame de Staël attempted to effect this reconciliation. She had no desire for the return of the Bourbons; for such a change could only have been operated through the subjugation of France by foreign troops, a circumstance to be looked upon as the lowest fall in its political greatness. She was the centre of a brilliant society, which, while it regarded the chiefs of the republic as vulgar, was attached to a form of government full of promise of distinction and power to able and daring men. In France the influence of women is one of the engines used by the other sex for their advancement. Madame de Staël had already placed one of her friends in an elevated post; she exerted herself for others. She was generous and active. No gall—no bad feelings of hatred, or love of mischief, mingled in her desire to be influential. But passionately loving glory, and eager to take a part in the busier scenes of life, she made her house the rendezvous of all parties, and sought her own elevation in trying to reconcile them all, and to diffuse abroad a spirit of moderation and mutual toleration, and was often exposed to the danger of imprisonment and exile from the preponderance of the more popular party. Her mind was active, her imagination lively; but she was without prudence. Her father said of her, that she was like the savages, who

sell their cabin in the morning and find themselves without shelter at night. Ardent but without forethought, ambitious of distinction without selfishness, she looked on danger as a crown of laurel, and, as far as she was personally concerned, cared more for the excitement of the combat than the repose of success. Thus, though she failed in her attempts to reconcile contending factions, she felt neither despondency nor sorrow. Meanwhile, the struggle of parties—the violence of each occasioning the weakness of all—became the stepping-stone to the man who, raising himself by the sword, and establishing and increasing his power by the same method, fell, when his weapon failed to be able to deal with all the enemies from the extremities of the earth whom he challenged to the contest.

Bonaparte and madame de Staël were neither impressed favourably by the other when first they met. He saw in her a factitious but a not the less powerful influence with which he could only cope by trampling it in the dust; and she found in him a man unimpressible by words or sentiments, aiming at one goal, and wholly indifferent to the thousands to be mowed down or the one tortured by the methods he used for his success. In their encounter she felt her existence strike against a rock which, while it wrecked whole fleets, did not disdain to swamp a skiff which had every right to expect shelter beneath its shadow. When, after the treaty of Campo-Formio, Bonaparte arrived in Paris, he and madame de Staël often met in society. She declared that a feeling of fear always overcame her in his presence. She was struck by his superiority, but repelled by a certain coldness that remained as a wall between them. When, for the sake of amassing funds for his expedition to Egypt, Bonaparte proposed the invasion of Switzerland to the directory, madame de Staël regarded the cause of the independence of that country as so sacred, that she sought a conference with the general for the purpose of turning him from his design. Nothing can better show the difference of

French manners from ours than this circumstance; and Bonaparte, a child of the army, little conversant with the spirit of French society, regarded a woman's interference on such a subject as impertinent and out of character with her sex; but, although he was not to be moved by her, such was her acknowledged influence that he did not disdain to discuss the question with her with an appearance of candour, till, having pronounced certain words which he considered sufficient to refute her arguments, declaring that men must have political rights, and advancing the falsehood that the Swiss would have more as a portion of France than as an independent insignificant state, he turned the conversation, and talked of his love of retirement,—of the country and the fine arts,—expressing himself as sharing many of the lady's own tastes. Madame de Staël felt the influence of his power of pleasing, but was mortified to be treated like a mere woman. He, on the other hand, perceiving that she had talents sufficient to persuade and influence men, and that she was likely to exert this power against himself, conceived a dislike, which he afterwards showed in a series of persecutions.

1798. Ætat. 32. The invasion of Switzerland being resolved on, madame de Staël quitted Paris to rejoin her father at Coppet. His name was still on the list of emigrants, which, as he was a Genevese, was altogether unjust. His daughter implored him not to risk the danger of being condemned to death when the country he inhabited should be occupied by a French army; but he refused to stir: he would not in his old age wander over the earth, nor would he quit the neighbourhood of the tomb of his wife, which had been erected under her own directions, with the fervent hope that her husband's remains would repose near hers. When the day came, fixed for the violation of the Swiss territory by the French armies, Necker and his daughter, with her infant children, remained alone at Coppet. Their servants assembled in the avenue to see the

passage of the troops, while they themselves stood in a balcony which commanded the high road. It was mid winter, but the weather was clear: the alps were reflected in the lake at their feet, while the sound of military music alone broke the silence of the scene. Madame de Staël's heart beat with fear for her father's sake. Her vivid imagination painted, her impetuous heart anticipated, a thousand horrors which transported her with terror. She perceived an officer quit a troop on its way, and direct his steps towards the château, — it was Suchet. He came charged by the directory to offer a safeguard to her father. Thus re-assured with regard to the dearest interest of her life, she began to feel fresh anguish for the Swiss, attacked thus against the law of nations. She heard at Coppet the cannon of the battle between the Bernese and French; — her heart, for the first time, was against the latter. As soon as the triumph of France united Geneva to its own territory, it became necessary that Necker's name should be erased from the list of emigrants. Madame de Staël visited Paris, and presented a memorial from her father to the directory. His request was accorded instantly and unanimously; and his daughter, so much more easily moved to kindly than angry emotions, felt grateful for this act of simple justice. She endeavoured also to treat with the French government for the payment of the two millions of francs which Necker had deposited in the public treasury. The directory acknowledged the debt, and were ready to defray it from the property of the church. Necker refused so to be repaid, from the noble motive of not choosing to mingle his worldly interests in the great question of the revolution, and so to forfeit the reputation for impartiality by which he laid store.

Madame de Staël witnessed, in Paris, the 18th Bru- 1799.
maire, when Bonaparte overthrew the power of the direc- Ætat.
tory and established his own supremacy. Her feelings 33.
were much divided: if the jacobins triumphed, sanguinary scenes might be renewed; but she anticipated with pro-

phetic grief the result of Bonaparte's success. As she always lived in a numerous circle, and openly discussed her opinions, the first consul soon heard of the dissatisfaction that she expressed with regard to his rising power. Joseph Bonaparte, to whom she was partial, came to her and said, "My brother complains of you. 'Why,' he said yesterday, 'does not madame de Staël attach herself to my government? What does she want? The payment of her father's deposit? I will order it to be made. To remain in Paris? I will permit it. In short, what does she want?'" "The question," she replied, "is not what I want, but what I think."

A tribunate made a portion of the constitution instituted in the first instance by Bonaparte. The tribunes were to have the right to speak. The first consul was aware that he must please the French at first by a shadow of freedom; but a few men were found among the tribunes who wished to turn the shadow into substance, and then Bonaparte put forth his power, and claimed the lion's share. Benjamin Constant, on the eve of attacking a measure proposed by the first consul, consulted madame de Staël. She encouraged him, through noble and conscientious motives, while she felt in her heart the injury that might redound to herself. The possibility of being forced to quit Paris filled her with alarm and wretchedness: her love for its society, her horror of retirement, had been implanted, as we have seen, in her breast from her earliest infancy; her brilliant powers of conversation fostered the taste, and she well knew also that Bonaparte was aware of her weakness, and would wound her through it. "He joined," she writes, "to the power by which he could threaten, and the wealth by which he could entice, the dispensation of *ennui*, which is held in terror by the French." Her drawing-room on this occasion was crowded by men ready to give in their adherence to the new government. Benjamin Constant drew near, and said, "your room is filled with persons whose society is pleasing to you: if I speak,

to-morrow it will be a desert. Think of this." "One must follow one's conviction," she replied. In narrating this anecdote, she frankly adds that she spoke on the impulse of the moment; but that, if she could then have foreseen the sufferings in store, she should not have had strength to refuse the offer Constant made to remain silent. He proved a true prophet. On the following day she received multiplied excuses for a party she gave. As they came she felt disturbed, and she began to find fault with her courage of the preceding day. To add to her inquietude, the minister of police, Fouché, sent for her to say, that the first consul suspected that she had excited her friends to speak against him. She replied that Constant was a man of too superior talents to need the interference of a woman in his political conduct. The result was that Fouché advised her to go into the country for a few days, saying that all would be well on her return. Such is the account that she gives of the commencement of Bonaparte's persecution. Other writers vary. The flatterers of Napoleon insinuate that she wished to gain an interest in his heart. Napoleon himself, when at St. Helena, says, that she became his enemy because he would not become her pupil. It were, perhaps, a fairer statement to assert, that he oppressed her because she refused to be his tool. At the same time it must be remembered, in exculpation of Bonaparte's arbitrary acts with regard to her, that he was then making difficult way up the slippery path of power; that she opposed his progress not only by epigrams and repartees, but by political intrigues. It was necessary to reduce her to silence and inaction. But this does not excuse his after persecution, which was wanton and unmanly.

Soon after, when Bonaparte passed through Switzerland on his way to Italy, having expressed a wish to see Necker, the latter waited on him, and spent two hours in conversation. The fallen and aged minister was gratified by this mark of interest on the part of the first consul, and pleased with his conversation. He

did not mention, as a meaner minded man would have done, the debt owed him by the French government; but he alluded to his daughter's position, and spoke of her as one whose name and talents would adorn the society of the capital. The first consul replied with courtesy; and the result was that she was hereafter to be permitted to reside in Paris.

Bonaparte felt that his present power needed the prop of opinion. Perhaps he hoped to gain the daughter by his civility and apparent respect for the father. But neither were to be bent from their convictions. This became apparent when, towards the end of the same year, she published her work on literature. Her talents had now reached their full development, and this book is one of the most masterly that has emanated from her pen. It is full of liberal opinions; it restored her to popularity; her salons again became thronged. Her society was chiefly composed of foreigners and the *corps diplomatique*. Fouché granted various requests made by her with regard to emigrants, and she had thus the pleasure of being useful to, and moreover became popular among, a class distinguished for urbane manners and the various charms that attend refinement. But her book added to the irritation nourished against her by the first consul. He wished the world to be filled with his name; and, in this point of view, the influence possessed by literary persons was of value in his eyes. Madame de Staël had not mentioned him, nor alluded to his achievements, in her work; and he looked on the omission as a wilful and galling insult. She never appeared at his court; he said of her that every one left her house less attached to him than when they went in; the rebel tribunes were among her friends; and all tended to nourish his discontent. One day she was asked to dinner by general Berthier, in company with Bonaparte. As she heard that he often expressed himself sarcastically with regard to her, she conjectured that he might address her with some of those rude speeches which were so much feared by the courtiers; and, afraid of losing

her presence of mind, she went prepared with various studied repartees. But he scarcely spoke to her, and she had the comfort of believing that he feared to sting a dangerous enemy.

She spent her summers at Coppet with her father. In 1799, M. de Staël had been recalled to Sweden. His extravagance had occasioned a separation from his wife, who feared that the fortunes of her children might be injured. A reconciliation was, however, set on foot, and it was agreed that the whole family should take up their residence at Coppet. On their way thither M. de Staël fell ill and died, his wife attending on his last moments. 1802. Ætat. 36.

Her novel of "Delphine" appeared about this time. It was attacked by the French critics as immoral. Madame de Staël was indignant. "They dared blame a book approved by Necker!" she exclaims. "Delphine" affords scope, however, for such criticism. She allows that it displays too eager a desire for happiness, the result of young and ardent feelings; but, worse than this, it inculcates no spirit of courage under disaster. Bulwer speaks of "fortitude, the virtue of the ancients, and resignation, the duty of christians," as the chief aim of a philosophic or pious mind: madame de Staël — and in this she is the founder of the Byronic school — made the chief feeling of her work impatience of life under sorrow, suicide in despair. This at once blights existence. To feel that adversity and prosperity are both lessons to teach us a higher wisdom, the fruition of which we hope hereafter to inherit, and which at the same time is the ornament and crown of good men during life, ought to be the aim of every writer. Sorrow is rife with desperation; we fly to the pages of the sage to learn to bear; and a writer fails in his duty when he presents poison instead of medicine. With all this, "Delphine" is a beautiful book. The character of the heroine is full of charm: the hero is delineated with a truth, a fervour, and a reality, that reaches home. The characters of madame de Valmont and her daugh-

ter are finely portrayed. "Delphine," it was said, was an ideal of the authoress herself; and the false friend was drawn from Talleyrand. "They tell me," he said to her, "that you have put us both in your novel in the character of women." Madame de Staël could well bear this sarcasm: she was truly feminine; her very faults belonged to her sex.

Her father published a book at this time which greatly irritated Bonaparte, and added to his dislike of the daughter. In his "Last View of Politics and Finance" Necker unveiled the progress which the first consul of the republic was making towards a throne. This untimely disclosure of his secret ways injured Bonaparte: he spoke bitterly of Necker, and said of madame de Staël that she should not visit Paris again, since she conveyed such false impressions to her father.

Love for this father was the master passion of madame de Staël's life. She looked on him as the wisest and best of men; but, more than this, his kindness and sympathy gifted him with something angelic in her eyes. He was her dearest friend — the prop of her fortunes; her adviser, her shelter, her teacher, her approver — the seal of her prosperity and her glory. He was an old man, and this imparted unspeakable tenderness to her attachment. Her very love of Paris, and her consequent absences from him, added force to her feelings. While away she gathered anecdotes and knowledge for his amusement. Their correspondence was regular and full. It contained a thousand narrations and sallies, observations on events and persons full of piquancy, a gaiety adopted for the purpose of diverting him; and over all was spread a tone of tenderness and reverence, which accompanied the very idea of her father. When she returned to him, she checked a little the demonstrations of her delight, but it overflowed in her conversation. Things, men, and politics, the effect she had herself produced, were all related with an effusion of joy, accompanied by caresses, by tears of gladness, and laughter full of love. Necker listened with proud de-

light. He loved her fondly. Her very faults, her want of forethought, which made his cares necessary; her uncertainty and doubts with regard to all the minor affairs of life, which she joyfully submitted to his direction; her exuberant yet uncertain spirits; her imagination that often plunged her in gloom, were so many ties to unite father and daughter in bonds of the fondest affection.

Yet she could not contentedly remain with him long. She disliked Genevese society; she was wrapt up in that of Paris. Her parents had planted the seeds of this love of display and eager desire for the arena, where wit and all that is the salt of life is to be met in perfection, and it was but fair that her father should reap the fruits of the education he had bestowed. He felt for her, and was deeply grieved that his publication had augmented the annoyances of her position. When the peace of Amiens was broken, and Bonaparte and all France were occupied by the meditated descent on England, she hoped to be forgotten. She drew near Paris, and established herself at the distance of thirty miles. The first consul was told that the road to her retreat was crowded by people paying her visits. This was not true, but it alarmed his jealousy; she heard that she should receive an order to depart. Hoping to escape by leaving her home, she went from house to house of her friends, but in vain. She was at that of madame Recamier when she received the fatal order to leave France in twenty-four hours. She would not at once yield; she asked for day after day of reprieve. Junot and Joseph Bonaparte interceded with the first consul for her; she pleaded as for life; but the petty resentment of the great man could not be mollified. He has done worse deeds during his reign, but take the worst said of madame de Staël, by his chief flatterers, and still no revenge could be meaner, no act of tyranny more flagrant, than that which exiled from his capital, and the country he ruled over, a woman, whatever offence she had committed against him, who promised silence; who asked but for the society of a

1803. Ætat. 37.

few friends; whose crime was that she would not celebrate the liberticide in her writings.

Forced to go, she could not persuade herself to appear disgraced and driven away among the Genevese. She hoped, and her father hoped for her, that new scenes, and the welcome afforded her among strangers, would blunt the blow she had received, and revive her spirits. She determined to visit Germany, with the intention of seeing its great writers, studying their productions, and of afterwards presenting the French with an account of the, to them, sealed book of German literature. Joseph Bonaparte gave her letters of introduction for Berlin, and she set out. Benjamin Constant accompanied her; yet this very kindness was the source of pain, as he also was partial to a residence in Paris. "Every step of the horses," she writes, "was a pang; and, when the postillions boasted that they had driven fast, I could not help smiling at the sad service they did me. I travelled forty leagues before I recovered possession of myself. At length we stopt at Chalons, and Benjamin Constant rousing himself, through his wonderful powers of conversation, lightened, at least for a few moments, the burden that weighed me down."

Constant continued to accompany her. She was well received at Weimar and Berlin. She was at Berlin at the time of the assassination of the duke d'Enghien, and shared the horror that this unnecessary act of cruelty excited. This circumstane added to her detestation of Napoleon. Meanwhile she greatly enjoyed the kindness she found, and the vast field of knowledge opened before her. A fatal event put an end to her pleasure. She received tidings of the dangerous illness of her father — the intelligence of his death quickly followed. She left Germany. She returned to Coppet overwhelmed with grief. Generally speaking, there is exaggeration and traces of false sentiment in her writings. Her best work for style and simplicity of narration is her "Dix Années d'Exil;" and the best portion of this book describes her feelings during her journey from Weimar to Coppet.

1804. Ætat. 38.

All who have suffered the worst of sorrows — the death of one dearly loved — will find the echo of their inmost thoughts in that passage.

The death of Necker changed the course of her existence, as far as internal feelings operate on the exterior of life. Her father had looked on her as incorrigibly thoughtless in all worldly and pecuniary concerns; but she was no longer in the heyday of youth; experience taught her prudence; and, being thrown entirely on herself, her conscience bade her preserve the fortunes of her children. She was a good mother. Having obeyed and reverenced her father — she exacted the same towards herself from her offspring; nor did she ever regard them with the exuberant trembling tenderness she had lavished on her beloved parent. But was kind — ever ready to serve them, and eager for their well-being. Her notions on education were sensible and just: she did not give trust to extraordinary systems; she contented herself by inspiring them with piety and generous sentiments; and was perfectly open and true in her conduct. They sincerely loved, while they a little feared her.

The society of her children and her friends could not console her for the loss of her father and exile from the country she loved. Her first occupation was to publish the writings of Necker, accompanied by a biographical memoir, in which she pours forth, with touching earnestness, all the ardour of her filial affection. Her health sunk beneath her sorrow. To revive her spirits and change the scene she visited Italy. There, as everywhere, her astonishing powers of conversation gathered an admiring audience round her. She enjoyed, with all the warmth of her disposition, the delights afforded by that enchanting country; and, impelled to express on paper the overflowing of her thoughts, she embodied her enthusiasm, her pleasure, and the knowledge she gained, in her novel of "Corinne." There is a charm in that work that stamps it as coming from the hand of genius. The personages live, breathe, and speak before

1805. Ætat. 39.

you. We hope or fear for, admire or censure them, as if they were our friends. She speaks of love with heartfelt knowledge of the mighty powers of passion, and of all those delicate, so to speak, fibres and evanescent tints that foster and adorn it. The faults of such a book are a very secondary consideration. The Italians will not allow that it is by any means a true representation of society in their country; and any one who has lived there can perceive that she had but a superficial knowledge of Italy and the Italians; still she gives a true picture of the surface such as she saw it. Her account of Corinne's life in England is admirable. The English, with all their pride, are less vain than the Italians, and readily acknowledge their faults. Every English person is at once astonished and delighted with the wonderful truth of her sketch of county society in England. In this novel, as in "Delphine," the heroine dies broken-hearted. Her lover proving false, she lives miserably a few years, and then closes her eyes on a world grown dark and solitary. Madame de Staël was naturally led to portray death as the result of sorrow; for when we are miserable, we are apt to dwell on such as the dearest relief; yet we do not die. The authoress also might wish to impress on men an idea of the misery which their falsehood produces. That is a story as ancient as Dido, and told by Virgil more impressively and beautifully than by any other writer. For the dignity of womanhood, it were better to teach how one, as highly gifted as Corinne, could find resignation or fortitude enough to endure a too common lot, and rise wiser and better from the trial.

Madame de Staël was exiled to forty leagues from Paris; her love of France caused her to approach so near to its capital. She established herself first at Auxerre and afterwards at Rouen. Here she terminated and brought out "Corinne." She exercised the utmost caution in her conduct, saw but few friends, and observed that silence with regard to politics which Napoleon rigorously exacted throughout his empire.

Fouché, who had no love of wanton mischief, allowed her to settle herself within twelve leagues of Paris. But the publication of her novel put an end to this indulgence, and redoubled the oppression in force against her. She continued to refuse to advert to Napoleon's victories and Napoleon's power; and the great man, than whom no hero was ever less a hero in all magnanimous sentiments, ordered her to quit the country. She returned to Coppet half broken-hearted.

The visits she received from her friends and illustrious foreigners somewhat relieved the tedium of her life. She was occupied by her work on Germany, and visited Vienna to gather additional materials for it. On her return, she devoted two years to its completion. She tried to make an existence for herself at Coppet, but did not succeed. Alas! for her, Goldsmith's lines on French society are but too applicable to her state of mind:— 1807. Ætat. 41.

> "For praise too warmly loved, or dearly sought,
> Enfeebles all internal strength of thought;
> And the weak soul, within itself unblest,
> Leans for all pleasure on another's breast."

She was, with all her vivacity, naturally melancholy. The *society of nature*, as she termed it, nursed her darkest reveries, and she turned from her own thoughts as from a spring of bitterness. As existence became stagnant, *ennui* generated a thousand imaginary monsters of mind; she felt lost and miserable. Death and solitude were, in her mind, closely allied. Take away the animation of conversation; the intercommunication of ideas among the many; the struggle, the applause, the stirring interest in events; the busy crowd that gave variety to every impression; and the rest of life was, in her eyes, a fearful vigil near the grave. It is beautifully said, that God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. Sometimes, however, the exact contrary has place, and our weak and sore points are sought out to be roughly handled. Thus madame de Stael, brought up to act a foremost part on the brilliant theatre of the civilised world, was cast back on herself, and found there only

discontent and misery. To us sober English, indeed, her life at Coppet seems busy enough. She assembled all travellers about her; her domestic circle was large; she acted plays; she declaimed; but it would not do: Paris was interdicted, and she was cut off from happiness.

1810. Ætat. 44. Having finished her "Germany," she desired to overlook its progress through the press at the permitted distance of forty leagues from Paris. She established herself near Blois, in the old château of Chammont-sur-Loire, erst inhabited by cardinal d'Amboise, Diane de Poitiers, Catherine de Medicis, and Nostradamus. A few friends gathering round her, she enjoyed the amusements and occupations she shared with them. Madame Recamier was chief among them, and very dear to her. Her plan was, as soon as her book was printed, to reach England by America, that being the only path left open to our island by Napoleon. She had submitted her work to the censor, and, having made all the alterations exacted, she felt herself safe. But the storm gathered, and broke unexpectedly. She had not praised Napoleon; she had not mentioned the success of the French armies in Germany; she had tried even to enlarge the sphere of French literature, by introducing a knowledge of and taste for the German—an attempt anti-national in the emperor's eyes. He did not hesitate to condemn such a work. The duke de Rovigo, minister of police, sent to seize on the edition, to demand the manuscript, and to order her to quit France in three days. She was proud of her book, and had every right to be so; and she gladly anticipated the applause and increased reputation that would follow it. The loss of this could be borne, but the renewed sentence of exile struck her to the heart. She was forced to obey. Her first idea was to embark for America; but her purpose in so doing was to get on board an English ship, and reach England. Her plans were disturbed by an intimation from Savary that she must embark only at the ports of France furthest from her desired goal. The minister wrote to her with flippancy, that her book was not French, and

that her exile was the consequence of the course she had followed for years. The air of France evidently disagreed with her; but the French were not reduced to seek for models in the countries which she admired. Savary was still more frank when speaking on the subject. He asked why she had made no mention of the emperor or his armies? He was told that such allusions were out of place in a book that treated solely of literature. "Do you think," he replied, "that we have carried on a war in Germany for eighteen years for so well-known an author to omit all mention of us? The book shall be destroyed, and we should do well to send the writer to Vincennes."

Her plans disturbed, hope dead within her, she returned to Coppet, almost resigned to pass her life in the château; but the hour had passed away when she was allowed to enjoy the tribute of visits from foreigners of distinction, and to gather round her such friends as she best loved. A series of the most tormenting and cruel persecutions were instituted, that acting on an imagination easily disquieted, and on a temperament that needed the atmosphere of joy to feel at ease, drove her into a state of intense and uninterrupted suffering. She gave up all idea, which must always be agreeable to an author, of publishing; she scarcely dared write. All her acquaintance as well as friends were looked on with unfavourable eyes. She could not venture to ask a guest to dinner; she was so afraid of compromising the whole family of any one who came near her. The prefect of Geneva was changed as being too favourably disposed. The new magistrate urged her to eulogise Napoleon as the sure means of putting an end to all her annoyances: would she only celebrate the birth of the king of Rome? She replied that she did not know how to do so: she could only express her hopes that he would have a good nurse. The prefect took his leave, and never came near her again. Her children were forbidden to enter France. She went to Aix, in Savoy, for the benefit of the health of her youngest son; she was ordered to return; she was ad-

vised never to go further than two leagues from Coppet. William Schlegel, whom she had engaged to live with her to assist in the education of her children, was ordered to quit her château. He had published a work, in which he showed a preference to the Phædra of Euripides over that of Racine; he was judged anti-Gallican; and she was told that his society was injurious to her. A thousand terrors seized her. Confined within narrow precincts, deprived of her friends, she began to fear a prison, where she would have been left to perish, miserable and forgotten. She resolved to escape—it was difficult to choose a route. She was told that she would be arrested on her way through any country under the dominion of the French. She passed her life, she says, in studying a map of Europe, to find how she could escape beyond the wide-spread poison tree of Napoleon's power. She traced a route through the Tyrol on her way to Russia and Sweden, and thence to England. A thousand difficulties presented themselves for the execution of this plan, but it was her best.

"There is physical pleasure," she writes, "in resisting unjust power;" the act of resistance was animating, but when the hour of defeat came all was stagnant, fearful, and oppressive. The worst blow dealt her was when she found that any friend who visited her was involved in the same oppression. An old friend, M. de Montmorency, visited Coppet; the delight of seeing him made her blind to danger. She made a tour through Switzerland with him in spite of the advice given her not to go further than two leagues from Coppet. They afterwards returned to her château, where M. de Montmorency speedily received an order of exile. This news plunged her in agony—that her friends should be wounded through her was worse than her own misfortunes. While still suffering from this disaster, she received a letter from madame Recamier, saying that she was on her road to Aix, in Savoy, and announcing her intention of visiting Coppet in her way. Madame de Staël implored her not to come; but her generous friend

could not pass so near without spending a few hours with her; — a few hours only, but they sufficed to call down banishment on her head: henceforth she was driven from her home and friends, and forced to take up her residence at Lyons in solitude and exile. All this was done to drive her to dishonour herself by praising him whose tyranny made him every day more odious, as the persecutor of herself and the oppressor of France. The prefect of Geneva was ordered to *annul her*, and he took pains to impress every one with the dangers that would accrue from any intercourse with her. He waylaid every stranger, and turned them aside from the path to her house; her correspondents in Paris were exiled; she felt that she ought to refrain from seeing any one. By a natural struggle of feeling she was disquieted when her friends generously sought, and still more miserable when they selfishly abandoned her.

She never saw the day return, she says, that she did not repine at being obliged to live to its end. She was married again at this time. This event, which was kept secret till after her death, is one of the most singular of her history.

In the year 1810 there came to Geneva a young Spaniard of the name of Rocca. He was an officer in the French army, and had been wounded dangerously in Spain. He inspired great interest through the reputation he enjoyed for brilliant courage and for talent. He was young and very handsome; but his wounds had reduced him to a state of great weakness and suffering; and the contrast was striking and interesting between his youth and noble physiognomy, and his extreme pallor and attenuated figure. He heard madame de Staël talk, and was seized with enthusiastic admiration. Necker said of his daughter that her conversation imparted an idea of the beautiful; and thus, though twenty years older than himself, and, except for her eyes, with no beauty of face, the young Rocca was attracted by that of her mind, and said, "I shall love her so much that at last she will marry me." These words were

soon fulfilled. But she refused to acknowledge a marriage which, from disparity of age, might have excited ridicule; and in all things of that sort madame de Staël was singularly timid. She was averse also to change her name. "Mon nom est à l'Europe," she replied to Rocca, when they were in England, and he jestingly asked her to marry him. She does not in her narratives advert to this marriage; but the fear must have haunted her that Napoleon would exile Rocca from Coppet; while, on the other hand, she found it difficult to leave an infant child, the offspring of their union, uncertain when again she could rejoin it.

These terrors and doubts threw her into a nervous state of the most painful kind. Now, she thought it wrong and foolish to leave her house, where she enjoyed every bodily comfort and the society of her children,—again, the fear of prison, the terror of who next among her friends would be the tyrant's victim, distracted her. At length she resolved to depart, and ultimately to reach England; whether by Russia and Sweden, or Greece and Constantinople, was to be decided by circumstances that might occur during her progress.

Her account of her journey is full of interest. An abridgment can give little idea of its difficuties,—the petty yet stinging annoyances by which she was beset,—the delays, the terror, the disappointments. Now she feared for her daughter's health,—and then still more for the safety of M. Rocca. The order for his arrest as a French officer had been forwarded through Germany. It is true he had sent in his resignation, his wounds preventing him from active service; but, if he had been taken, there is no doubt that he would have been treated with the utmost rigour. They were often obliged to separate, and he rejoined her once or twice in moments full of peril to himself. She traversed Germany and Poland in this way; and even in Russia she was not sure of escape from Napoleon. His armies had entered that vast empire, and were close behind her.

It was matter of joy to her when at last, after passing through Moscow, she arrived at St. Petersburg, to find the emperor Alexander full of resolution and ardour to resist the despot. He treated her with great distinction; and she proceeded on her way to her old friend Bernadotte, at that time crown prince of Sweden. She remained eight months at Stockholm. She had begun a portion of her "Dix Années d'Exil" at Coppet, it being copied as fast as written by her friends, feigned English names and old dates being substituted for the real; since under Napoleon's police regulations it was not safe to preserve a page of manuscript in which he was blamed.

From Sweden she passed over to England, where she occupied herself in publishing her "Germany." She was courted as a *lion* in English fashionable society; and, though her style of life and conversation were very opposite to our manners, still she impressed every one with high ideas of her talents and genius. The Whig party were a little surprised at her tone in politics. They were not yet accustomed to regard Napoleon as the tyrant and oppressor, and they thought that madame de Staël had changed her principles when she warmly advocated war against the emperor. She was intimate with all the English of distinction. Her compliments seemed a little *outré* to us, and she made a few mistakes that excited smiles; still she was liked. Lord Byron was among her favourites,—his genius possessed fascination for her. There was a notion at one time that he would marry her daughter, whom he admired; but Albertine was reserved for a better fate.

All her patriotism as a Frenchwoman was painfully roused when the allies entered France; still she hailed the overthrow of Napoleon, and the restoration of the Bourbons, with delight, hoping that the latter would deserve well of their country. She was liked by Louis XVIII., who repaid her the two millions which Necker had lent the state. The return of Napoleon from Elba

filled her with terror, and she instantly left Paris for Coppet. He, who now appeared with a professed attachment to constitutional liberty, invited her to return and assist him in modelling a constitution. She replied, "He did without me or a constitution for twelve years, and has no liking for either of us." The occupation of France by the allies filled her with grief; that her "belle France" should be held in these degrading chains seemed desecration, and she retreated to Coppet not to witness the humiliating spectacle. She was there when lord Byron resided at Diodati in 1816. He visited her, and she gave him a good deal of advice to which he listened, and was induced to make an attempt to be reconciled to his wife. When she preached lessons of worldly wisdom, he quoted the motto to "Delphine"—"Un homme doit savoir braver l'opinion, une femme s'y soummettre." But she replied that she feared that both sexes would reap evil only from resistance.

1816. Ætat. 50.

The marriage of her daughter to the duke de Broglie, and the admirable character of this lady, formed the chief happiness of her latter life. Her children were all dutiful and affectionate. Her chief sorrow resulted from the ill health of M. Rocca, who tottered on the brink of the grave. He deserved the affection he inspired. His tenderness towards her was extreme, and his admiration never waned. His chivalrous sentiments, his wit, and his poetic imagination, varied and filled her life. His ill state of health, while it disquieted her, yet annihilated their difference of age. At one time she visited Pisa, that he might be benefited by a milder climate. He was there at the point of death: she compared herself to marshal Ney, who was then expecting at each moment to receive his sentence. Endowed by an imagination which never blunted any sorrow, but which exaggerated all, she said afterwards that she had composed a book, with the title, "The only Misfortune of Life, the Loss of a Person beloved."

Her character softened as she advanced in life,

and she appreciated its real blessings and disasters more rationally, at the same time that she acquired greater truth and energy in her writings. This may often be observed with women. When young, they are open to such cruel attacks, every step they take in public may bring with it irreparable injury to their private affections, to their delicacy, to their dearest prospects. As years are added they gather courage; they feel the earth grow steadier under their steps; they depend less on others, and their moral worth increases. She was an affectionate and constant friend, and the sentiments of her heart replaced the appetite she formerly had for the display of talent: she placed a true value on courage and resignation, when before she had reserved her esteem for sensibility. She grew calmer, and ceased to fabricate imaginary woes for herself, happy when she escaped real ones. She grew pious. From her earliest years she had strong feelings of religion, resulting from dependence on Providence, from adoration for the Supreme Being, and hope of a future life. The Christian principles mingled more entirely with these sentiments in her latter years. As her health declined, her sleepless hours were spent in prayer, and existence lost, as it often does to those about to leave it, its gay and deceptive colours. "Life," she said, "resembles Gobelin tapestry: you do not see the canvass on the right side; but when you turn it the threads are visible. The mystery of existence is the connection between our faults and our misfortunes. I never committed an error that was not the cause of a disaster." And thus, while the idea of death was infinitely painful, the hope of another life sustained her. "My father waits for me on the other side," she said, and indulged the hope of hereafter being rejoined by her daughter.

She perished gradually: the use of opium, from which she could not wean herself, increased her danger; nor could medicine aid her. She died in Paris on the 14th July, 1817, in her fifty-second year. Rocca survived her but a few months.

She possessed too much merit not to have many enemies during her life, and these were increased by her passion for display, and the jealous spirit with which she competed with those whom she looked on as rivals. The eagerness with which during the days of the republic she mingled in politics, and her attempts to acquire influence over Napoleon, were arms that she put into the hands of her enemies to injure her. They accused her of an intriguing meddling disposition, saying of her, that to make a revolution she would throw all her friends into the river, content with fishing them out the next day, and so showing the kindness of her heart. But her faults were more than compensated among her friends by the truth and constancy of her attachment. Her temper was equable, though her mind was often tempest-tost, clouded by dark imaginations, torn by unreal but deeply felt anxieties and sorrows. "I am now," she said, in her last days, "what I have ever been, — sad, yet vivacious." To repair wrong, to impress on the minds of princes benevolence and justice, were in her latter years the scope of, so to speak, her public life. She loved France with passion. Lord Brougham records the alarm and indignation which caused her to pant for breath, as she exclaimed, "Quoi donc, cette belle France!" when lord Dudley, half in jest half seriously, wished the Cossacks, in revenge for Moscow burnt, to nail a horse-shoe on the gates of the Tuileries.

Our memoir has extended to so great a length that we can only advert cursorily to her writings. M. Anneé, a French critic, observes of her, that her understanding had more brilliance than profundity; and yet that no writer of her epoch had left such luminous ideas on her route. Chateaubriand, while he deplores the party spirit which gave irritation to her sentiments and bitterness to her style, pronounces her to be a woman of rare merit, and who would add another name to the list of those destined to become immortal. She wrote on a vast variety of subjects, and threw light on all. Yet she

gathered her knowledge, not by profound study, but by rapid dipping into books and by conversation with learned men; thus her opinions are often wrongly grounded, and her learning is superficial. Still her conclusions are often admirable, granting that the ground on which she founds them is true. She has great felicity of illustration, and her style is varied and eloquent, the fault being that it sometimes abounds in words, and wants the merit of concentration and conciseness; often, too, she is satisfied with a sentiment for a reason. Her wit is not pleasantry, but it is pointed and happy. She neither understood nor liked humour; but she enjoyed repartee: many are recorded as falling from her, and they are distinguished by their point and delicacy. Her "Dix Années d'Exil" is the most simple and interesting of her works; but her "Germany," perhaps, deserves the highest rank, from its research, and the great beauty of its concluding chapters. Of her novels we have already spoken. They do not teach the most needful lesson — moral courage; but they are admirable as pictures of life and vivid representations of character, for subtle remark and vivid detail of what in youth forms our joys and sorrows. She puts much of herself in all; and thus adds to the charm and truth of her sentiments and ideas. Her "Considerations on the French Revolution" is valuable, from its affording us a personal picture of the impressions made by that epoch; but the great preponderance of praise which she gives to Necker renders it a work of prejudice. Like him, she had no strong republican sentiments. She desired an English constitution; she disliked the girondists as well as the mountain, and attempted the impossible task of reconciling the interests of the nation as established by the revolution with that of the *ancienne régime*. Her feelings are praiseworthy, but her views are narrow.

Such is the defect of human nature that we have no right to demand perfection from any individual of the species. We may sum up by saying that, though the character and writings of madame de Staël, in some respects,

display weaknesses, and though she committed errors, her virtues and genius raise her high; and the country that gave her birth, and which she truly loved, may, with honest pride, rank her among its most illustrious names.

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LIVES OF

EMINENT LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC MEN OF ITALY, SPAIN, AND PORTUGAL.

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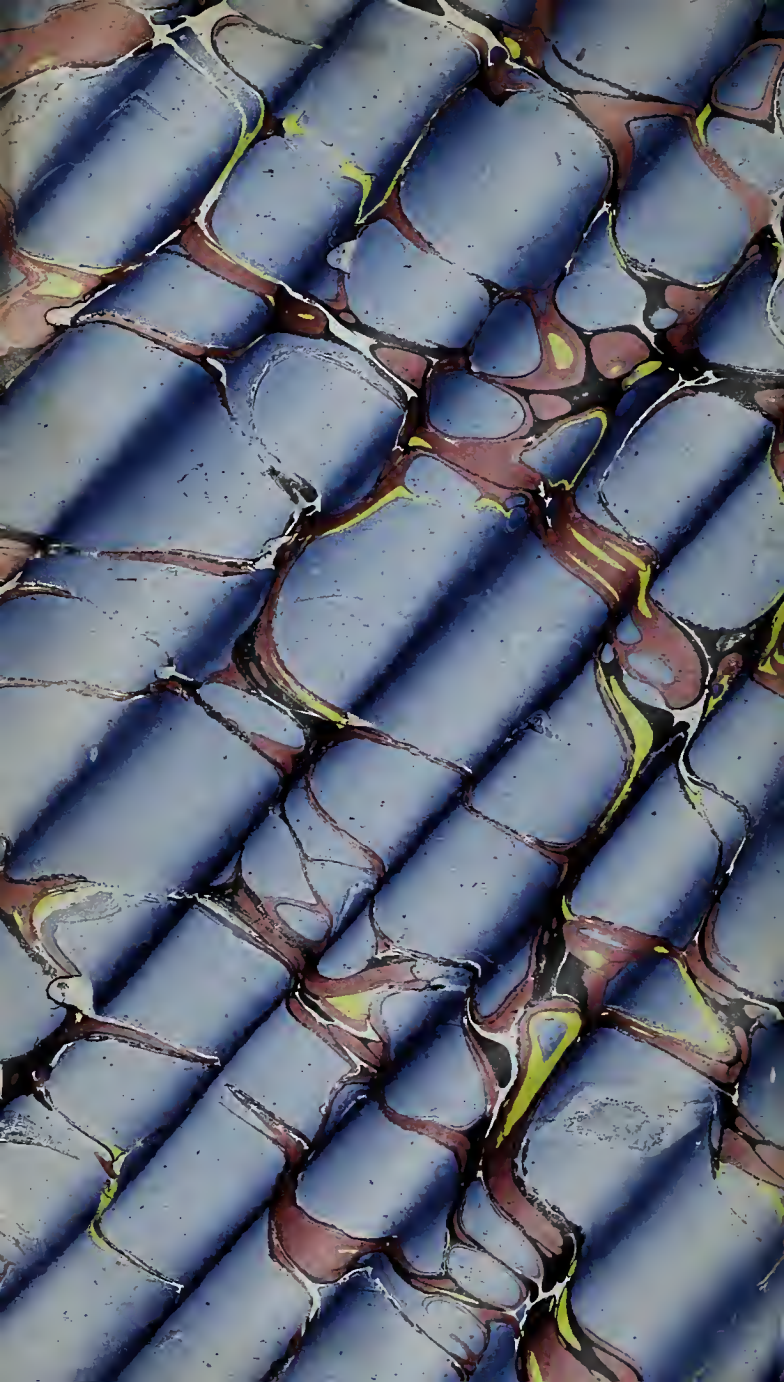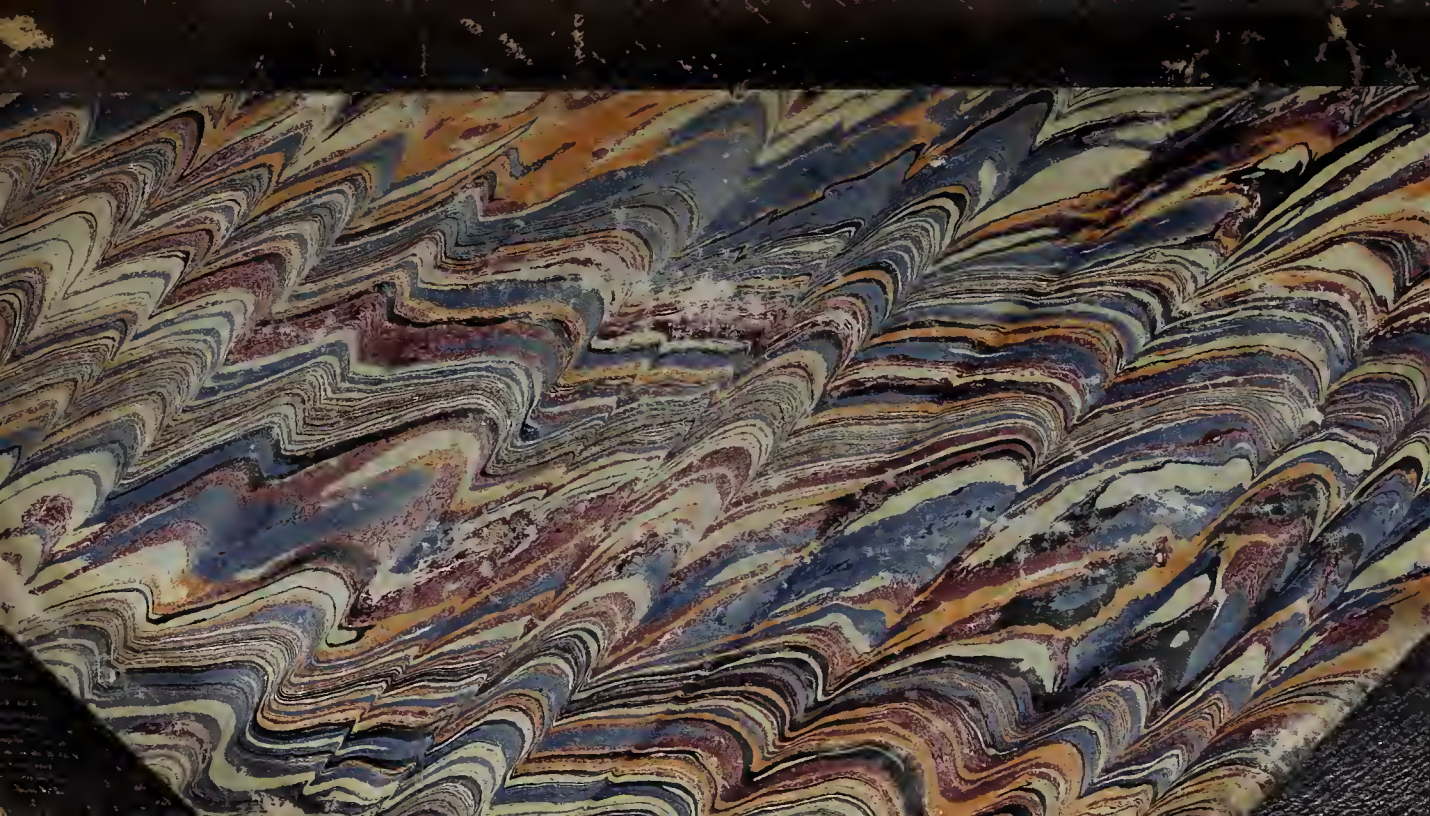
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